

Conferences on discipleship like the one I just attended in Spain tend to raise questions of curriculum. This is something I've wondered about also as I have sought to disciple men. The concern that I might leave out some vital lesson worried those I was teaching more than me. I might not get to the lesson they needed before their faith or obedience was tested, or before they needed it to share with their mentee. Then I found Hal & Debbi Perkins' book, and was able to put to rest these misgivings.

If I could choose any person past or present to disciple me, who would I choose? Now, failure is no bar to coaching... and of all the worthies I know, every one of them has messed up, lost out on some shepherding task, or had to confess some 'BIG' failing at least onceexcept Jesus. Would Jesus be open to discipling me? I've tested the Perkins's advice, and the answer is an emphatic "Yes!"

Now my ministry of discipling must be about coaching *everyone possible in how to be disciplined by Jesus, which means coaching them in how to be 'with Him,' how to sit at His feet, how to meaningfully practice His presence, how to respond in faith and obedience. Each disciple needs the primary tools for their own deepening before they can coach others. Practicing the process on our own, establishing the life habit of regularly "sitting at Jesus' feet," hearing and answering His questions and promptings and so being disciplined by Him, equips us to help others, till they too are regularly sitting at Jesus' feet themselves and together in groups. And on and on it can go if watched over and coached.*

Hal and Debbi first take a look at our human wills, and share a powerful **parable of "Little King Will."** This story so truly illustrates how well I have been conditioned by a lifetime of faulty reasoning; how my character, attitudes and decisions have been moulded by my mind, my emotions, my desires and my body's 'need' for ease and comfort. If I am to live to please Jesus I must train myself to filter all these internal voices, plus the voices of my friends and society's values, and check their input against the Word and the will of God. The great news is I can have my mind renewed, and I can bring all my emotions, desires and 'needs' into subjection to the love of Jesus and Word of God. As I express my personal aim to please Jesus in everything, He will disciple me and lead me into greater depths of relationship, to make me so much more responsive to His purposes for me.

The questions Jesus used to disciple His followers are the questions that can achieve this realignment of my spirit. They will build on my studies, both group and personal, and on the teaching I hear as much with each question as with the third: "Are you listening?" The Perkins point out there is no particular sequencing for Jesus questions, but each of them helps us with an aspect of our growth as disciples. A Scriptural rationale for dealing with each question is followed by a Perkins conversation as it might happen in any life group.

"Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16v15) is the question that allows us to reflect on the character of Jesus. There are hundreds of answers we might give as we rejoice and adore Jesus for one particular aspect of His character. The Perkins encourage us to discuss or journal on what that quality of Christ means for us and how we could reproduce this part of His character in our lives. We get to slow down and ask Jesus to coach us in this quality.

Question 2: **"Do you understand what I have done for you ...or in you or through you?"** (John 13v14) leads us into thanksgiving as we recognize his remodelling of us, His provision and protection for us, and the ways He has used our availability.

Question 3: **“Are you listening?”** is implicit in each of Jesus’ parables; and in the words of the Father to Peter, James and John at the Transfiguration. We marvel with them at His glory and authority, and in our relationship with Jesus we sense the real need to hear and apply His words of warning, instruction, example, truth, promise (open and conditional) for our lives. Above all, the commands of Scripture confront us with our need to obey.

Question 4 is about **how much we really love Jesus**; for like Peter (John 21v15) if we really love Jesus. We will want to accept His commission and put our lives totally at His disposal. Again the discussion chapter on this question is very practical. The final question **“Do you really believe Me?”** (John 11v24-5) helps us focus on whether our trusting Him is bound by human expectations based on experience, or on the power of God. Do we actually claim His promises knowing He will fulfil them now? This lifts our eyes to the priority of kingdom requests, that Jesus plans to fulfil His will in and through us, with the certainty that He promises to care for all the ‘other things’ that concern us as well, as we focus on ‘Kingdom.’

This most recent Perkins book is a real ‘must-read’ for all disciples, and so helpful as we lead others and are led in practicing the presence of God in our lives, sitting at His feet and submitting to the remodelling He is ready to do.