

002 The Importance of Discipleship

Podcast Transcript:

In Part 2 of our podcast, we hear more of Jim Downing's wisdom when it comes to walking with Jesus and teaching others to do the same!

Jack: We talked last time about the importance of one-on-ones. Talk to us about the importance and the quality of the time you spent with Dawson Trotman (the founder of The Navigators).

Jim: I've written a study on this, and I talk about one-on-ones being the best kind of training secret of growth. John Dewey, a great American educator – I don't agree with everything he said, but he said once that example was not the best way of teaching. It is the only way. So in one-on-ones, there are a lot of examples that we set the pace in. I've found that in a group, people will never fully share what's in their hearts, because they don't want other people to hear it. But in a trusted relationship that's been established, why you'll find out and can help the person with what's closest on his heart.

Jack: Talk to us about that trust relationship. How does one go about doing something like that?

Jim: I think that one thing is that you never share with anybody else what's talked about in your time together. And then you go out of your way to do things for the other person that shows a genuine interest in them as a person.

Jack: For you, was discipleship really life-changing for you in those early days?

Jim: I'm trying to think as we talk here of the first time I

ever heard the word 'discipleship.' It wasn't in our vocabulary then (in the beginning). It was life-changing to receive parental nurture, and to be helped, step-by-step, towards maturity. We didn't have a name for it in those early days. When somebody came to Christ, we were expected to follow them up with spiritual nurture. Dawson Trotman had an interesting statement that he enforced. He said, "You cannot leave your babe on somebody else's doorstep. When you've led somebody else to Christ, you have that responsibility for their spiritual maturity."

Jack: What are some other things that you were challenged in by Dawson?

Jim: The things that are in The Navigator's Wheel Illustration – of course, he composed them – and he thought they were the secret of Christian maturity. So he talked about one of the spokes so regularly and sometimes repetitively that it got kind of boring!

Jack: I remember Lorne Sanny saying it was originally a chair, but that Dawson didn't really like that it wasn't moving...

Jim: Well, actually it was a milkstool. And Dawson got that from a pastor who was mentoring him. You have to balance on a three-legged milkstool, so he emphasized these three things: The Word, prayer, and witnessing. But as you said, Dawson didn't like the idea of a Christian life sitting down. And he said, "I've known people strong in the Word, strong in prayer, strong in witnessing, but they have such a sour disposition that they turn people off. There must be another spoke." So he came up with a fourth spoke, which came from Colossians 3:23, which says, "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord and not unto men." So he wanted to put that in, to be a cheerful person.

Jack: As you think about this call that God's given us to take a run at The Great Commission, is that everyone's

responsibility? What does that look like, in your mind?

Jim: I think I like Ezekiel 33 in connection with that. It's about the watchman, that when danger came, he's supposed to blow the trumpet. So if he blew the trumpet he's done his job. And if he fails to blow the trumpet, he is condemned. So I feel that every Christian has the obligation to blow the trumpet among the people they live with and have influence with.

Jack: Where do you find opportunities for this?

Jim: The most opportunities I have are on an airplane as I'm flying. It used to be easy to talk to the person I'm sitting next to; now they take things out and put them in their ears. But to grab their attention, I take out my Bible and read it. And then I ask them, "Do you ever read the Bible? Do you have a Bible?" And their answers vary a lot. Then I turn to John 3:16, and I say, have you ever heard this verse before? Many of them have. So I say, "Well, I have 7 questions I'd like to ask you about this verse. Some are hard and some are easy. The first question is, according to this verse, what did God give?" That's easy. He gave his only begotten son. The second question is harder. It is, "Why did he give him?" And it's kind of hard to get the right answer when we're talking about motive, but it's because He loved the world. The next question is, "To whom has he given him?" That's a real hard one because they'll say the world, but it's to whosoever believeth in him. And my next question is, "Does that include you?" And if they hesitate on that, I say, "Let me just change the question a bit." I use Ephesians 1:7 and 1 John 1:10-12. So I say, "Do you have the assurances that your sins are forgiven? Do you have eternal life?" And then depending on what their answer is, my next question is, "What does a person have to do to receive an offered gift? They have to say, 'I'll take it.' I think it's very fortunate and no accident that we met today so I can tell you exactly what you have to do to receive this gift. I'll pray a short prayer, and if you can follow you

follow the second time. And that short prayer is, "Heavenly Father, I thank you for offering your son. I do hear now receive him, and invite the Lord Jesus to come into my heart, to forgive me my sins, and to give me everlasting life." And the second time they follow word for word. So that's what I like to do, but I always start with John 3:16. And if they ask a question, and they often do, I say, "Well let's finish these other questions before we do that, and then we'll talk about that."

Jack: What would you say to someone who's out there and has caught the vision for discipleship and wants to start discipling someone, but still feels under-qualified, or just doesn't know how to start?

Jim: The best way somebody disciplined you: some of the things worked. Emphasize what worked for you. That's the best place to start.

Jack: And what about someone who's never been disciplined? Who maybe came to Christ through church?

Jim: Seek out someone who can help them grow. Then as they grow they can pass it on. Howard Hendricks from Dallas Seminary used to say that everyone needs a Paul in their life and a Timothy. Just because we're doing something doesn't mean we can't learn from someone who is more mature. Everyone needs a Paul and Timothy.

Jack: What would you look for in someone to disciple you?

Jim: I think that those words you mentioned can be summarized in one word: Integrity. Look for a person of integrity. What he talks about is what he does. I'd like to say a word about The Great Commission. I may be in the minority. I believe that The Great Commission can be accomplished and nobody be converted. The Great Commission doesn't say we're to go about and convert everybody. Matthew 24:14 says "this message must be preached for a witness for everybody." Some will receive

and some won't. Our job is not to convert everybody. It is to be a witness before everybody.

[Back to the Blog and Podcast page ->](#)

[Sign up for weekly emails ->](#)