



Coaching Guide

Relational Connections



Balance the relational tension between "insiders" and "outsiders"

"The juice goes out of Christianity when it becomes too based on faith rather than on living like Jesus or seeing the world as Jesus saw it."

Steve Jobs

Our goal is to heighten your awareness that you need both non-Christian and Christian friends in your discipleship journey. Without both, you build a discipleship ramp not a cycle. You will learn to live in the balance of the relational tension between "insiders" and "outsiders".

Because you love God, love others and make disciples, we agree on the need for relationships both within the church and outside the walls of the church. We need both to navigate our journey of faith, and a disciple's path will look different for each and every follower of Christ. Our big question here is why are most Christians surrounded by Christian friends and how do we begin to change that?

Before we begin this journey to introduce the nuanced progression from a disciple to a disciple coach here are our basic definitions:

- The disciple, by definition, is a follower of Jesus.
- The disciple shifts, ever so slight, when they become a disciple maker.
- The disciple maker shifts, by adopting a coach approach, to multiply disciples.

Overview

When it comes to our Christian friends vs. our non-Christian friends, it is easy to emphasize one over the other. What normally happens when a new Christian follows Jesus is that their relationships with "outsiders" begin to shrink while their relationships with "insiders" expands. Eventually, the circle with "insiders" dominates the life of Christians to the exclusion of any genuine relationships with "outsiders".

It's a gradual and natural progression because we only have a finite amount of free time. Example: we go to church on Sunday, then small group during the week, men's group or women's group, we have service projects we do together, and we spend time reading the Bible and thinking about our relationship with Jesus. At the end of the month, we had very little time for those not connected with our normal routines.

What we may be missing is building meaningful relationships with outsiders (non-Christians) God has already placed in our lives. School friends, work friends, friends you hang out with at home or friends you do unique activities with. We all have several people we connect with repeatedly. It may be a cashier at the grocery store, home improvement store associate or neighbor you generally run into. Building relationships is not a job or task; it's just about letting God work through you in the natural relationships you already have. I have no doubt you will have your own challenges depending who God designed you to be - just step out where God has you.

Below is a story of one person's struggle to strike the balance of keeping one foot in the circle of friends inside the church and the other foot planted in the circle of friends outside the church as a disciple coach. Hopefully, this will serve as a catalyst to balance the relational tension between "insiders " and "outsiders" as a disciple coach.

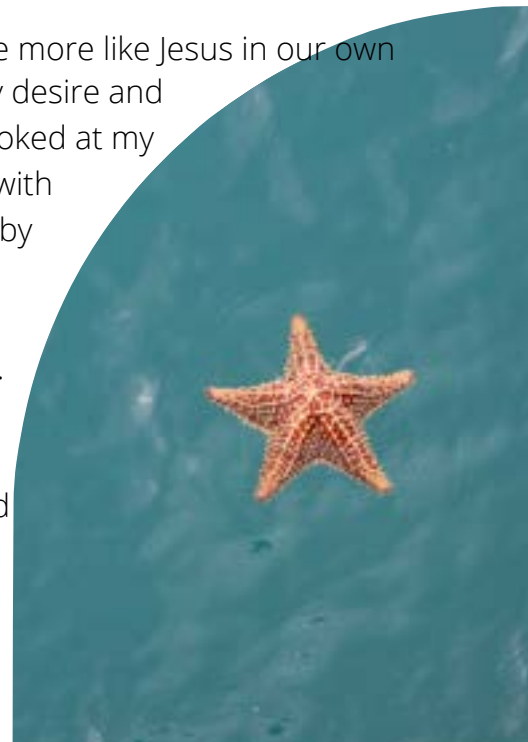
Real-life Journey

I have always held the view that my discipleship began when I made the decision to follow Jesus. One of the ways I have done that is being held accountable by several close Christian friends. We meet regularly and discuss the following questions:

- What is God calling you to do and how is that going?
- Where are you seeing God at work in your life?

These conversations are challenging and enriching, helping us become more like Jesus in our own lives. I have begun to realize I have been missing a critical element: my desire and role to reach out to those who are not yet Christian (outsiders). As I looked at my own discipleship, it became evident that I had only built relationships with Christian friends. So how did I begin to change that? For me it started by asking: Who was I helping to see God in their life?

I began to pray and look to see who God had already placed in my life. I have been a part of a group of men that do a winter event and summer event for years. It's more like a big party (snow skiing and houseboating). Within that group there were two men that God placed on my heart to go a bit deeper with. One I found out was a Christian, and one, far from God. But he is beginning to ask more questions and still comes up with his own reasons not to believe just yet.



I became friends with one guy and found out he was a Christian too. I was able to walk with him through a divorce and along the way met more non-Christians.

As disciple making has come to be front of mind, it is more natural for me to look for and develop intentional relationships with people that don't yet have a spiritual connection to Christ.

Reflect

Take 20 minutes of alone time and walk through the Reflection Questions below by writing out your answers on a piece of paper. Most of us resist writing our answers down, but please take the extra several minutes to do so.

1. Relationships with non-Christians

- Who are you intentionally forming discipleship relationships with?
- Using the following progression working from left to right, how would you classify your current disciple-making efforts?

Relationship

Friendship

Discipleship



- What skills do you need to develop and apply to move your relationship or friendship forward on the above progression:

- listening,
- asking questions,
- prayer
- other _____?



2. Relationships with Christians

- What Christians are you forming intentional relationships with to support your disciple-making efforts as a disciple coach?
- What is missing to help you stay on-mission as a disciple coach?
- What step can you take to strengthen your discipleship relationships?

Act

This week, take five minutes and pray through your relationships with people you know who are far from Christ. Remember: a discipleship cycle starts with non-Christians. Write down what you heard during your time in prayer.

Second, meet with one non-Christian and begin moving from relationship to discipleship. Don't try to make it in one leap. Build a friendship first and let that lead to discipleship.

- How did you do?
- What might you do differently?
- What was your biggest take away?

Discover

We know that Jesus valued community. He lived life with His disciples and built their lives around transforming relationships within his circle of followers. Jesus helped the disciples take steps on their spiritual journey, crossing a line of faith that culminated with their mission to make disciples. He built redemptive relationships wherever He went. With people outside his circle of followers Jesus modeled the absolute necessity of building relationships with both insiders and outsiders.

Ephesians 5:15-17 says, *“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”*



Be wise and make hanging out with non-Christians a priority. On your weekly calendar create a recurring time to meet with non-Christian friends.

Going Deeper

Quote:

"The beginning of love is to let those we love be perfectly themselves, and not to twist them to fit our own image."

- CS Lewis

Verses:

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

- Hebrews 10:24-25

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house."

- Matthew 5:13-15

What book, video, podcast, coaching, webinar or additional support do you need to strengthen relational connections for your disciple coach journey?

