

2023 | LESSON 3

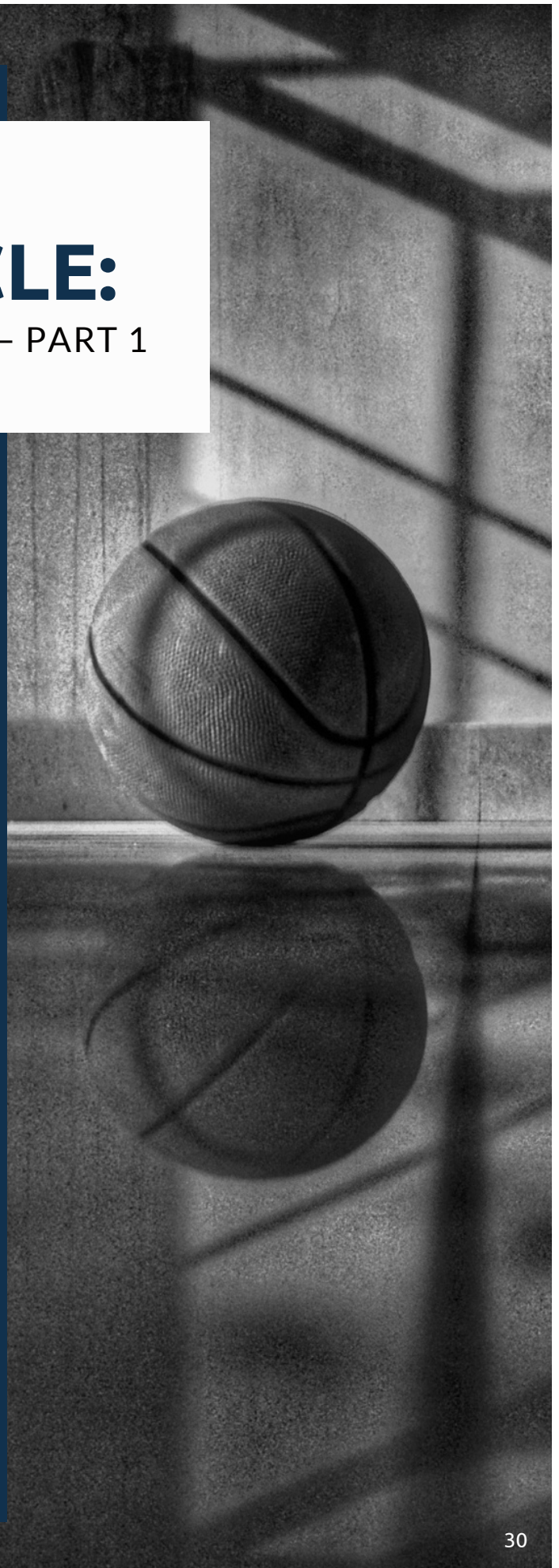
DISCIPLE-CYCLE:

SUPPORTING YOUR LEADERS – PART 1

REDEFINING SUCCESS

John Wooden is arguably the greatest basketball coach of all time. From 1964-1975, his UCLA Bruins teams won a record-breaking ten national championships. Though Wooden won more titles than any other coach, he rarely used the word “win” with his players. He defined success as something other than wins and losses.

He developed his philosophy of success while teaching high school English during the 1930’s. What he encountered was that parents were fixated on their children’s grades. Wooden recognized that it would be considered a high achievement for a hard-working, mediocre student to earn a “B.” At the same time, a “B” from a more gifted student who did not give their best effort should be considered a disappointment. From this Wooden came to define success as “peace of mind that comes with the self-satisfaction in knowing you did your best to become the best you were capable of becoming.”



In similar fashion, success in a disciple-making movement is not focused on how well people perform according to some static, one-size fits all model, but if it is multiplicative in application. We are not just looking to simply add people to groups. We are desiring to see God raise up leaders who will help us move beyond the four walls of our meeting place.

This leads us to our fourth value which is: To be and make disciples, we must shift from a centralized/solo form of leadership to a distributive/shared approach. One of the best ways to help make this happen is for a pastor to move from a catalyst role, in which he gets things going, to a coach role where he trains and supports a fellowship of leaders.

Following the Disciple-Cycle focus of both the means of being a disciple and the methods through which we make disciples, we have built a coaching process that develops leaders who will be developing others. We call this process the M.O.V.E. model of coaching which stands for Manifest Grace; Optimize Discussion; Validate Insights; and Elaborate Goals.





MANIFEST GRACE

Every time you meet with someone you are seeking to help grow into a leadership role, you will need to remember that they will often bounce between the poles of self-criticism and self-congratulation. Shame and pride gum up the flow of leadership development probably more than anything else. Because of this, you will need to gently remind people that their sense of calling and confidence is anchored in the foundational reality that they are accepted by the Beloved.

There is a tendency of those coaching emerging leaders to want to get them going on the path as fast as possible. While challenging people has its place, to lead a coaching conversation with this mindset often causes people to figuratively run and hide. There is no growth without honesty, and there is no honesty without an environment of unconditional acceptance. People will have breakthroughs when they feel it is safe to admit their struggles or are empowered to confront their blind spots.

The goal is not meteoric ascendancy into some kind of exemplary competence. It is the slow and steady growth into Christ-likeness, and the expansion of leadership capacities that are linked to that holistic view. There are times when doing this will lead down a path that wasn't anticipated. That is ok. You are not aiming for the artificial fulfillment of an agenda. You are looking for deep growth. With that in mind, some questions you might ask to help create a grace-filled environment are as follows:

- What is a victory you've experienced since the last time we've met?
- How is your family?
- What is a struggle you are encountering that I can help you with?
- Who have you been able to help lately and what did you learn from that?
- How are things at work?

When we manifest grace, we are saying that who they are is more important than what they do. It is therefore very important to remember that you as a coach need to believe this for yourself. A person who regularly exults in grace is someone who is able to more effectively demonstrate it to others.

OPTIMIZE DISCUSSION

Once you have established a baseline of care you can then move to identify the focal point of discussion. While you want this person to know that they can share anything on their heart, you need to find a way to connect it to leading a discipleship triad or leading leaders. We call this stage optimizing discussion.

Probably nothing you do in a coaching conversation boosts efficiency of time spent more than centering on a main issue or topic that you and your coachee agree needs to be covered. There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit can move the conversation in a radically different direction, but in most situations a guided conversation is the best route.

For a leader to progress they need to both recognize where they are and where they want to go. Jesus practiced this approach by clarifying what was most important in his conversations with a religious leader and a woman who was despised in her community (John 3-4). In both situations he moved them from general ideas to specific considerations. While he used different word pictures to fit the context, he got their attention by showing how they both needed eternal life and that it can only be accessed through faith in him. Some of the questions you might ask in this step of the coaching conversations could be as follows:

- What questions are your folks asking?
- What obstacles are getting in the way of people moving forward in their relationship with Jesus?
- If you could change one thing in your last meeting, what would it be?
- What is one thing you would like to improve on in your walk with the Lord?

The leader who can get very specific about what they want to see occur in their life is the person who can benefit most from coaching.

VALIDATE INSIGHTS

Once your coachee hones in on a particular issue, you can move them forward by helping them explore options for getting to where they need to be. Self-discovery in the context of being a follower of Christ and leading others to know him is the goal. You will be tempted at times to “tell” them what they should do. While there is a time to do this, the aim of coaching is for people to think for themselves. This does not mean you don’t challenge them. In fact, this is very appropriate. It is all about how you do this.

When you ask questions that require people to pause and think, you prepare them to not only come up with an answer, but, also through that process, own that insight. As the saying goes, “Everyone wants to buy but no one wants to be sold.” The more we tell people what to think and do the more we will run into resistance or passive agreement.

Jesus was the master of calling people’s assumptions into question. For example, in Mark 7:24-30 Jesus encounters a woman who is outside of the Jewish faith, and is probably a pagan. She has come to Jesus with a request for him to heal her daughter who was demon possessed. He makes a provocative statement that actually seems insulting at first. He basically told her that only people who had faith in the true God could ask for this and that her corrupted lifestyle disqualified her. Her response was that no matter how corrupt people were, they could humbly ask God for assistance. This insight into faith opened the floodgates of God’s blessing. Some of the kinds of questions or statements that can nail down the validity of their insight could be:

- What would happen if you put that into practice?
- How would you punch holes in that idea?
- Where do you see this idea being played out in Scripture?
- How would you explain this to other people?
- Are there any other valid approaches?

Real growth happens when people discover something that could help them move forward and feel empowered to make it occur.



ELABORATE GOALS

Insights are only as good as our plans to implement them into our daily lives. What we are looking for is not mere knowledge but activated faith. This involves clear, measurable, Spirit-dependent, time-linked goals that get the coachee to fully engage themselves into a series of actions that helps them to more closely walk with Christ and be better disciple-makers.

Too often, this is where things break down. To do something different or better involves discipline, concentrated effort and sacrifice. Spiritual inertia is born from just having good intentions or seeking to erase any risk from the equation. Think of the desire to get into better physical shape. This encompasses diet and exercise. If you are not eating well or are sedentary, getting started requires a good bit of focus and energy. In similar manner, if the insight that your coachee has is easy to implement, chances are it isn't what really needs to happen in their lives. It is not that everything has to be inherently difficult. It is that there has to be an element of challenge to make it worth their while. Some questions you can ask at this stage are:

- What are some clear steps you can take now to get going?
- What are the potential obstacles that could get in the way?
- How are you going to handle these obstacles?
- Who can help you accomplish this?
- If you do this, what are the clear benefits?
- What happens if you don't do this?

Getting people to elaborate their goals not only gets them on the path towards real progress, it provides a contact point for future discussions. The art of good coaching is to persuade people to maintain a mindset of lifelong advancement.

QUESTIONS

1. How do churches typically define success?

2. How does this differ from the goal of making disciples?

3. What could get in the way of you manifesting grace with your coachee?

4. Why is it difficult to optimize discussion?

5. What is the greatest temptation in validating insight and how do you avoid it?

6. What part of elaborating goals seems most challenging?