



THE COMPASS

A TOOL FOR DISCIPLERS

Growth

Conversation On the Journey

Perhaps you've seen the t-shirts: "Under Construction. God isn't finished with me yet." Kitschy as it is, it's a slogan that accurately describes what should happen to our character, regardless of age: constant growth.

J.P. Moreland, in his book, *Love Your God with All Your Mind*, bemoans the decay of our intellectual, spiritual, and emotional growth as whole and integrated women and men. He asserts that we have become lazy, not taking the effort to grow into full maturity, and so after earning an education, we become lethargic and stagnant, and our overall maturity begins to atrophy.

So, how does one stay sharp and continue to grow in character?

The Necessary Environment

People grow in the context of relationships, and in order to provide that kind of environment, try keeping this easy equation in mind:

Grace + Truth + Time

Atmosphere of Grace: where mistakes and errors are forgiven and one does not have to work to earn love and acceptance.

Environment of Truth: where the Word is spoken to challenge, encourage, and correct, and helpful, evaluative feedback is given. There is no fear of truth when one is surrounded and affirmed by grace.

Element of Time: knowing that someone is in it with you over the long haul. Growth is not instantaneous, despite our fast food society and quick fix mentality.

A key idea for today: Growth Happens in the Context of Relationships. Think about this idea for a few minutes. Growth happens when we are free to be ourselves, and can bring out our junk, warts and all, to a small group of people. Then there is freedom to experience real healing, forgiveness, and brokenness.

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This Week's Excursion

By the end of today's discussion, your disciple should be familiar with the concept of the "Growth Model," with an eye on at least one area for personal growth.

By the way, this lesson has the potential to go deep if the relationship supports it. Don't forget to invest time in your disciple to really enjoy them, and build trust so that together with the Holy Spirit, discipleship times can result in character and spiritual growth.

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The Components of Growth

In *Changes that Heal*, Dr. Henry Cloud addresses the issue of character development and the skills necessary for maturity. But when we talk about the Growth Model, we mean the four basic developmental tasks that help a person grow into mature character, and an equation for growth.

Let's take a look at each component. (All of the quotes are from Dr. Henry Cloud's book, *Changes that Heal*.)

Bonding. "The ability to establish an emotional attachment to another person. It's the ability to relate to another on the deepest level. When two people have a bond with each other, they share their deepest thoughts, dreams, and feelings with each other with no fear that they will be rejected by the other person."

A key text is Matthew 22:37-39. Bonding involves becoming vulnerable, other centered, and embracing love as God's highest value.

Boundaries. "...In a broad sense, are lines or things that mark a limit, bound, or border. In a psychological sense, boundaries are the realization of our own person apart from others. Boundaries, in short, define us."

A key text is 1 Corinthians 12:14-16. Having healthy boundaries enables us to define ourselves, our responsibilities, and our limits.

Good/Bad Split. "We are both good and bad. The people around us are good and bad. Our natural tendency, however, is to try to resolve this problem by keeping the good and the bad separated. This creates a split in our experience of ourselves, others and the world around us – a split that is not based on reality and cannot stand the test of time and real life. Trying to keep the good and the bad separated results in an ability to tolerate badness, weakness, and failure in ourselves and others."

A key text is Philippians 3:12-15. Maturity concerning the good/bad split means we admit and accept our strengths and weaknesses, and adopt a "progress" mentality.

Becoming an Adult. "Becoming an adult is the process of moving out of a "one-up/one-down" relationship, and into a peer relationship to other adults. "Adults" make their own decisions without permission from others, evaluate and judge their own performance, choose their own values and opinions, and disagree with others freely, etc. This is the final step of development so that one can exercise the gifts and responsibilities God has given."

A key text is 1 Corinthians 13:11. Adulthood allows us to embrace responsibility and authority, and live free under God's rule.

Next Steps

See last page.

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Talk with your disciple about some of the areas that are tough for you in the Growth Model. Remember, we are all in process. No one is perfect. And we are all working in at least one area.

Don't fear sharing your weaknesses with your disciple. Your struggles may be an encouragement to your disciple. She may think you have it all together. But chances are, she's already seen a few of your not-so-hot points. And if she hasn't, well, her respect for you may grow because of your vulnerability and honesty with them. Your self-awareness will be a model for growing in character.

But remember, this is not a counseling session for you, or for them. If it looks like seeing a professional counselor would be a good idea, talk to a staff member for a Christian counselor recommendation, or visit the counseling service on campus.

Side Trails

Check out Dr. Henry Cloud's book, *Changes that Heal*, for an in-depth discussion about the four developmental skills. It has great examples that you may want to discuss with your disciple, or your discipler!

Dr. Cloud has a companion workbook for *Changes that Heal* and a book entitled, *Boundaries*, which is a broader discussion of a *Changes* chapter.

Love Your God with All Your Mind by J.P. Moreland is a bit more challenging than a Max Lucado book. But if you are willing to put the time and effort into it, you'll be encouraged to embrace the concept of lifelong learning for intellectual integrity to better worship God. You just may start using a dictionary too!

Talk to a staff member if you are a little foggy on all of this. The more you hear it, the more it makes sense.

Growth

Next Steps

Ask your disciple where they are strong, and where they may need some development. Give them some positive feedback in the strengths you see (“I’ve really seen you grow in this area...” or “This area is a strength for you right now as evidenced by...”). Give specific examples and verbally (truthfully!) affirm your disciple. Don’t be afraid to point out a blind spot or opportunity for development. But this isn’t the time to dump on your disciple and “fix” everything that YOU think may be wrong. That’s the Holy Spirit’s job. Agree together on an area of growth (perhaps you should suggest it) and to make a plan for taking steps of faith for growth and development. Dealing with conflict is a common area for growth, and can fall into any of the developmental areas, depending upon the circumstances.

Maybe you need some help thinking up some discussion questions. If that’s the case, here are a few questions to get you started thinking about the development of your disciple (and you!)

Some Suggested Questions for Discussion

Over-bonded? Too deep, too fast? Do you dive deep without scuba gear? How does it feel for the people with whom you talk? Do you or they need to come up for air? Are you too intense? What about your conversations?

Not bonded enough? Do you have deep, intimate connections here on campus, or are they all at home? Do you form tight, but not exclusive, friendships? Can your friends have other friends?

How can instant messenger help or hurt our skills in bonding, both on the web and face-to-face?

Are you comfortable saying “No” to all of the opportunities that come your way? Do you assert your own opinion when you have one, or just say, “I don’t care?” Do you have your own opinions? Do you listen with openness to the ideas and opinions of others?

Do you try to fix other people’s problems? That can be seen as “mowing other people’s yards.” You are only responsible for what is growing in your yard. Does someone repeatedly try to mow your grass? Do you let them? Or are you the intruding groundskeeper?

Are you a boundary buster, encouraging others to do what they’ve communicated that they don’t want to do? Are you always pushing the limits? Is that in a healthy way?

Are you a perfectionist? How do you deal with failure? Does failure make you “all bad?”

Do you put people up on pedestals? What happens when a leader disappoints you? Are you able to forgive them, or are they crossed off your list of “respectable/admirable” people?

As you move from kid to adult, do you recognize that you have to take responsibility for your life? That includes fiscal responsibility, and learning how to live a healthy life. Set a schedule in which you can study, exercise, eat a balanced diet, and get adequate sleep. Being an adult means accepting the responsibilities of your life stage.

How do you respond to rules and/or authority?

†End



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