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Introduction:

My Early Apprenticeship Experiences

I grew up on a dairy farm, where my father and mother apprenticed me in almost every area of life, including the spiritual, vocational, and emotional facets of my life.

I learned the discipline of hard work and the joy of financial remuneration at the end of the week. I learned skills for which I shall always be grateful. I remember one afternoon that my father took my brother and me up to the haymow to fix a wooden hay shoot that had begun to fall apart through many years of use. He helped us get the ladders and saws and lumber and nails, instructed us on what needed to be done and then let us do it while he worked on other things. As I hung off the side of the ladder, sawing a board on the hay shoot, I remember thinking, “Dad could do this in a fraction of the time that it is taking me.” But he was apprenticing us in a skill. He was overseeing but he was **letting us do the work**. I was gaining new skills for which I am very thankful.

Master teachers (those who apprentice) take many forms in our lives. They instruct us in spiritual matters, they give us vocational training, and they train us in interpersonal skills, as well as teaching us to become comfortable within our own hearts.

Everyone needs people who will apprentice them (i.e. master teachers or disciplers). Disciplers are friends who take the time to invest in our lives in one way or another. They are people to whom we turn in times of distress and upheaval, transformation and growth. They speed up the process of learning as we go through life and help us avoid some of the common mistakes which we otherwise are prone to make.

I am sure that as you think back over your life you will become aware of many trainers who have invested in your life in many ways. I can think of partners, pastors, teachers, counselors, and spiritual advisors who have spoken helpfully into my own life.

Jesus served as a master teacher to the twelve disciples. He walked with them and talked with them and demonstrated how He wanted them to live. After a period of training, He questioned them, revealing the level of their learning, then helped them see more clearly how to solve their dilemmas. We read in John 6:5,6:

When Jesus then lifted up His eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to prove him: for He himself knew what He would do.

Jesus was a master at apprenticing or discipling, and He provides the standard and pattern for us as we approach this fascinating subject.

Discipling (or apprenticeship) is the fastest method of learning and was the primary approach which Jesus used. We will do well to master it in our own lives and experiences. Let us press on with excitement, discovering how we ourselves can become involved in discipling and being disciplined.

Concerning Personal Application Exercises

Learning is most complete when you interact with God, with others, and with yourself about what you are learning. This kind of “personal encounter” is typical of the Hebrew style of teaching, whereas the Greeks simply passed on detached information. You are encouraged to utilize the Hebrew style of learning by keeping a notebook and completing in it the personal application exercises that are found at the end of each chapter. May your life be enhanced as you work your way through this book. May you be blessed with friends, coaches, and disciplers in your walk through life.

Chapter One

People Whose Spirits I Have Received

My life has been filled with people who have had a great impact upon me and changed me mightily. I saw in them a gift or spirit (attitude, motivation, or character trait) which I hungered for, so I spent enough time near them and with them to soak it up until it was present in me also.

This is the core of a discipling relationship: receiving the spirit and anointing of another. For example, the disciples saw in Jesus a Spirit and an anointing which they desired. After spending a year and a half with Him, watching Him in action and experimenting alongside Him, they received the same anointing and the same Spirit. They were then able to go out on their own and minister in the same way that Jesus did. He had passed on to them the Spirit and the anointing which He had. That is what I hope to receive from others when I am disciplined by them.

I have received this impartation through many ways: through being with my disciplers, by listening to their teaching tapes, by watching them minister, by reading their books, and by ministering alongside them. Let me share a few stories from my own life that show how this has worked in me.

Early apprenticeship through a book

Immediately after my salvation at age 15, I read a 300 - 400 page book entitled **The Apostle**. It was a novel about the life of the Apostle Paul, and it riveted my attention and galvanized my commitment to be just like him. One key phrase that stuck with me and became my motto for many years was, "In every city Paul entered, there was either a revival or a riot." That is what I wanted to have spoken about me, also. And it was, for a good many years. However, generally there was a riot rather than a revival, until I became so bruised that fifteen years later I adopted a new motto, this time from the Apostle John: "Little children, love one another." Incidentally, that is my current motto at age 43.

Early apprenticeship into arrogance and a "party spirit"

From my conservative, fundamentalist church I picked up the spirit (attitude) and teaching of exclusivism, arrogance, independence, and rejection of all that was not flowing from our denomination. I especially adopted a disdain for tongues-speakers and Catholics. This was negative discipling, but discipling just the same. It was further fueled by one of my professors in the Christian liberal arts college I attended. In

class, he regularly spoke about the horrors of the charismatic movement. I delighted in his mockery of it.

Apprenticed while at college

Another professor at college who left a lasting imprint on my life was Professor Anderson. He taught the course “Life of Christ”, but what he really imparted was his spirit (attitude). He made me see a gentle, radiant love for God, an earnest desire just to know Him. Both my wife and I have fond memories when we think back upon this loving elderly gentleman. He imparted his spirit into us and changed us forever.

So did my wife’s father, Lyle Hudson. His motto was, “As much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” This brought a softening to my radical behavior, because as I said earlier, my goal was a riot or a revival. I enjoyed confrontation. Now, I was receiving a different spirit, the spirit of a peacemaker. And Lyle demonstrated this spirit as well as confessing it. He has profoundly softened me as a result of the time we shared together.

Apprenticed while in ministry

Then came the first pastor I worked under, Rev. Roy Straub, a Wesleyan pastor. He taught me a gentle love for the sheep and the value of ministry without conflict. For three years I worked under him and we had no schisms, only wonderful growth and wonderful experiences. What a beautiful introduction into the ministry! I always look back on those years with fond memories.

I began to change again when Patti and I met some new people. First was Judy Austin, the teacher under whom Patti was working as a student teacher. She was the first charismatic with whom I had ever had an ongoing relationship. She invited us into her home and fed us great meals. (They sure beat the alternative, college cafeteria meals!) She had such a spark

of life! I had never met anyone as alive as she was, or as committed to the Lord. The stories she told of healings and miracles and deliverances were unbelievable! My face-to-face encounter with her shook my previous teachings and attitudes to the core. How could she be so nice and loving and Christ-like and empowered? None of this was possible, according to my training about such people.

I was learning an important truth: **Personal encounter** beats detached learning any day of the week. And this revelation now permeates my learning style, whether it is me learning a new topic myself, or me as a teacher, imparting it to another. The Greek style of learning is “detached information”. The Hebrew style is “personal encounter”. I have changed from Greek to Hebrew, and encourage everyone else to, as well. The Hebrew style is taught and exemplified in all of Scriptures. One of the big reasons that Christianity in the Western world is so off-track is because of its faulty approach to learning. They have followed the Greek approach rather than the Hebrew, Biblical approach.

This experience of personal encounter also instilled in me a commitment to never again hold negative views about any person, group, or sect based on what others tell me about it. I need to **meet the people and talk with them myself** because in many cases they are not the evil they have been purported to be. The early negative discipling I received coupled with experiential learning to form a lasting conviction and imprint that radically affects my life. My new approach is very different from the “conservative Christianity” in which I grew up. I will not accept negative teachings or stories about others. I will meet with them and draw them out and discover who they really are and what they have discovered as right and just and valuable in life. This has allowed me to discover many gifts way outside my teachings and traditions, and has spiritually enlarged me as I walk through life.

Exploring the forbidden

Now I was changing. I was beginning to explore the charismatic movement. I went to a charismatic church and looked into the faces of the worshipers there because I had been taught that they would be unbalanced, erratic individuals. However, what I saw was love, joy, peace, and vitality. Unbelievable! How could this be? Was my learning all wrong? I began to look for charismatic teachers who could instruct me in the ways of the Spirit. I found several through a wonderful charismatic cassette lending library which contained thousands of teaching tapes. I listened to hundreds of them. Certain teachers who taught in the approach that most suited my personality style at the time really moved me. I was an analytical researcher/teacher, so I fell in love with other analytical teachers. My number-one discipler at that time was Derek Prince. I listened to about 450 of his teaching cassettes and soaked up everything from him that I could. He provided me with my foundational charismatic theology. And I believe I learned another thing, even though I did not put it into words until many years later. It was a principle which I have lived by for the last twenty years.

Learning a key to apprenticeship

When I find a person who has a spirit or anointing or understanding which I desire, I soak up that person as much as possible until I have received an impartation of his spirit, gift, and anointing. I want it to rub off on me so that it is mine as well as his. And I believe this is the crux of what happens in a discipling relationship: We receive an impartation of the spirit and the anointing of another. I try to sit under his personal ministry if at all possible. (I have been blessed to sit under Bro. Prince's personal ministry to a small extent.) I listen to their tapes, and I am likely to read every book they have written. The key books and tapes that are really speaking to me, I go through time and time again until I have "it".

Writing is my style of learning. Until I have put it in my own words, it is not mine. So I underline books, take notes, and then write out my own summaries which I generally practice and teach until they are a part of me. Then I go on to the next step of growth and development which God has for me. I have used this approach consistently for twenty years, and it has paid off rich dividends. I am now a unique blending of those who have imparted themselves into me, stirred together with the unique personality which God gave me, and delivered on the platter of life which God has set before me. It has resulted in my writing about fifty books, traveling worldwide, and teaching for the last ten years in some of the largest churches around this planet.

Apprenticed into a revelation of Galatians 2:20

Not only did Derek Prince powerfully and radically change my life during those years, so did Malcolm Smith. He was my second most influential teacher during this time. I listened to about 150 of his teaching cassettes and realized he had the ability to impart revelation knowledge, something I also desired. From him I learned a pattern for doing this through the spiritual unfolding of verses and principles of Scripture, coupled with the outstanding use of stories. I realized that revelation came only from the spirit and began searching for a deeper spiritual reality. I also sensed that Bro. Smith had a deep revelation of the fact that Christ is our life, and it is not we who live anymore. I listened to him teach on this over and over and over again. I wanted to grasp this revelation knowledge also. We invited Bro. Smith to speak at the church I was pastoring and I had the opportunity to share with him personally. He told me that the one who had disciplined him in this revelation was Norman Grubb, so I purchased every book Norman Grubb had ever written and read them again and again. It was through praying over and re-reading his book **God Unlimited in Daily Living** that the revela-

tion finally struck and the lights went on in my life. I immediately began to put the revelation in my own words and began living and preaching it. So far I have written about this revelation of the “Christ-Life” in two books: **Abiding in Christ** is the earlier and more theological rendition of the revelation, and **Naturally Supernatural** is the more practical, flowing version, written ten years later.

Another key to learning

In the Old Testament, God commanded that when a new king took the throne in Israel, his first responsibility was to personally write out an entire copy of the first five books of the Bible (Deut. 17:18). God knew that when we write, we see things we have never seen before. I have practiced this principle for 25 years.

Another reason I rewrite the truths of those I am studying is that I don’t totally agree with everything anyone says, except the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, I want to pull out the parts I do agree with and state them in the way that is most acceptable to my heart and mind. Now, that doesn’t mean that I am right and they are wrong. No, that means that at the age I am and with the personality and experiences God has given me, this is the best and clearest way for me to communicate the truth. Since I am always growing and changing, and since the light in our hearts gets brighter until the day dawns and the Morning Star arises in our hearts (2 Pet. 1:19), I will always be in revision and so will my books. I do see through a glass darkly, so I will not declare that I have all truth, but that this is as much of the truth as I can grasp from this limited perspective in my life. It does not mean that others are wrong, nor does it mean that they are right. I am not the one who must judge them. God is. I simply receive from their spirit and their anointing what I can handle at this time in my life.

Being apprenticed does not require total agreement in all areas

I suppose that I should be clear, since there are a lot of cult-chasers out there who aren’t at all happy with all the teachers who have apprenticed me. Just because a person has been my discipler does not mean I receive everything they say as gospel truth, nor does it mean that I teach everything they teach. What it does mean is that I have drawn out of that person’s heart and anointing and knowledge some gifts which I am seeking to integrate into my own life.

Even though I do not agree with everything Malcolm Smith or Norman Grubb teaches, both imparted powerfully into my life. I was blessed to have Malcolm Smith come and teach at my church on several occasions, so he disciplined me through his books, cassettes, and in person — a winning combination, I suspect.

Apprenticed to receive an overcoming spirit

Ern Baxter was another man who imparted his spirit to me. I heard him preach at Elim Bible Institute, and I listened to many of his cassettes. He imparted to me **faith to take the nations** for Christ by the power of the Spirit of God. Never before had I heard such powerful preaching, and this inspiration would be coupled years later with a deeper understanding that would come through the teachings of Gary North and David Chilton who taught on Reconstructionism.

I am not a reconstructionist. But there is an attitude of faith to disciple the nations which I have received from them, and there is an understanding of how to interpret the Bible in a way that promotes this level of faith that they have imparted to me. Earl Paulk also imparts this attitude through his message on the Gospel of the Kingdom. Bro. Paulk discusses more the fact that this will be done through the power of the Holy Spirit, whereas reconstructionism leans more to the power of the principles of Scripture.

I do not agree totally with either of the above, however they have imparted a spirit and understanding to me which I believe is important. I have also learned to beware of negative spirits which they might also have which I do not want imparted to me. It seems very easy for one of these teachers to attack anyone with whom he disagrees. I have been careful not to let that spirit rest upon me, because that is the same spirit of exclusivism in which I was trained when I was first saved and have since needed to discard. I do not want to pick it up again.

God leads and apprentices through strings of “chance encounters”

Then my discipling took new directions. God was bringing inner healing to the forefront in the Church and as a pastor I was interested because life had taught me that the counseling tools I was currently using as a pastor were inadequate to meet everyone’s needs. I needed more “power tools”. So I was hungry and I was looking. The trail of disciplers in this case is intricate and amazing, as God linked together so many divine encounters, I am left simply stunned.

It started by my deciding to (or by God leading me to) attend Harris Wilcox’s Bergen revival tent meetings. We had first met Bro. Harris as an auctioneer when he auctioned the equipment from my father-in-law’s farm. As I browsed a book table at the back of the tent, I discovered a book on inner healing by Michael Scanlon, a Catholic priest. I read it and found great value and help in it, so I got on the phone and called to see if he would come to our church to teach us on inner healing. He was booked for two or three years in advance, but he recommended Fathers Dennis and Matt Lynn who were doing an inner healing seminar in New York City within the next few weeks. I called New York immediately and was able to register at the last minute for Patti and me to attend. We went down with an air of excitement as well as apprehension to this Catholic Retreat Center.

We had never before sat under teaching by Roman Catholic priests. We were nervous since we had both been taught about the evils of the Roman Catholic Church.

Well, the spirit, the gifts, and the anointing upon Fathers Dennis and Matt just blew us away. They were the most loving and Christ-like men we have ever met, anywhere. Their key words were “love” and “Jesus”. It destroyed all my preconceived notions about the evil of Catholics, and I realized one could indeed be a Catholic and love the Lord and move under the anointing of His Spirit. The week stretched us so much we considered leaving part way through. However, we did stick it out, and things which we could not accept then I have learned to accept now, many years later.

For example, we were given holy water to sprinkle on things. I rejected mine. Now I realize that if Paul could have a holy handkerchief which could carry an anointing for healing, we can surely have healing water. It is exactly the same principle — divine energy has been imparted into an inanimate object and carried by it to the one the object touches.

Our lives were irrevocably changed that week. First, God blew the sides out of my theological boxes and showed me that He has children within the Catholic Church. Second, Fathers Dennis and Matt led us into deeper experiences and encounters with God through the power of the Holy Spirit than I had previously experienced in my life. Third, I became exposed to dance as part of worship, in a more beautiful expression than I have ever seen in Protestantism even to this day. And fourth, I purchased all of Father Dennis and Matt’s books and took them home and read and digested and preached from them for weeks to come. They led me into an effective ministry of inner healing.

And most amazing, the footnotes of their books led me to an Episcopalian priest who had a real grasp on how to experience God and could state it from philosophical, theological, intellectual, psychological, and practical perspectives. What an amazing combination! I had been hungering to learn to hear God's voice, and this priest, along with the Lynns, provided me with several of the keys I learned that year. They also stretched me greatly. The Episcopalian priest is not what I consider an evangelical Christian, which is what I grew up in and consider myself. I had the privilege of hearing him in person when he came to Buffalo and conducted a week of training. There, some of the major differences between him and me became painfully obvious, and even though he gave me some of the greatest keys of my entire life (in the area of how to hear God's voice and how to see vision), I still to this day feel a considerable theological distance between us. However, I did read about fifteen of his books, some of them many times. I just went over to a shelf in my library and picked off the book by this priest which has had the greatest impact on me. I hold it with very fond memories and strongly desire to read it again since it has been about fifteen years since I last read it. I am sure **new** things will hit me as I read it afresh.

One danger in being mentored

I write all this with some hesitation because I know what some people may be tempted to do with this information. A crusade may be started, saying, "See, he has been taught by men with impure theology. Therefore, we must reject this work." I have sometimes concealed the names of my disciplers in the past because, when I revealed them, I was attacked by well-meaning conservative Christians telling me I must repudiate my learning from these books. So, I have hidden the fact that I have learned from certain individuals. However, I am at a point where I do not care quite so much about what certain people think. You will never satisfy some people, and my life is my life. It should be able

to be shared. God does rain on both the just and on the unjust, so even people with impure theology (which includes all of us) can receive the revelations of God. I have stated and I will state again, I do not agree with everything my disciplers have taught me. There is a lot I do not agree with. I am not sure that that makes them wrong and me right. I am just saying I do not agree with many things they say, and I would not recommend all my disciplers to anyone. Some I recommend only to pastors whom I sense have the ability to sort out the truth from the error and receive only the wheat, while discarding the chaff.

My life message was distilled from imperfect mentors

These mentors did powerfully impart truths into my life which have in turn given me my life message, communion with God, and for which I am eternally grateful. This life message has led me around the world many times already and given me a rapidly growing national and international ministry.

The list of my disciplers goes on and on. It is exciting to see the intricate road God takes in helping us come in contact with those whom He wants to influence us. It can be casual acquaintances, phone calls, footnotes in books, tapes, seminars, conferences, and any other way in which two human beings interact. In this book, we will help you discover who your many disciplers have been, how these relationships have developed and been terminated, what lessons you have learned, where you are currently, and where God wants to take you.

We will discuss the ins and outs of establishing discipling relationships, the hurts and pains that can easily accompany them, and how to heal those injuries. We will discover that discipling relationships can be short or long, and can impact one or several areas of your life.

What is your basic personality style?

You may discover that different personalities prefer different methods for discipling. Even though each of us generally will use a variety of methods, including personally meeting our discipler, reading their books, listening to their cassettes, etc., we have found that extroverts spend more time talking with people, while introverts spend more time receiving through books and tapes. Both my wife and I tend toward introversion so the greater part of our discipling has come through books and tapes and the lesser part through personal encounters. Both ways are fine. You will note that Moses was disciplined on the back side of a desert and even Paul apparently got alone for three years in the Arabian desert to learn directly from God (Gal 1:17,18). On the other hand, Jesus took twelve men and spent about one-and-a-half years with them. So both emphases can find Biblical support. I suspect it would be wisest to accept the way God has made you and receive your discipling **primarily** through that means, while at the same time reaching out to embrace any and all styles. Blessings as you discover what God has brought you through, where He has you now, and where He is taking you. May we celebrate and enjoy the journey of life.

Application Exercises

1. What has been your definition of discipling?
2. What has been your opinion of what happens in a discipling relationship?
3. What do you feel about the author's definition of discipling, which is "soaking up the spirit and anointing of another"?
4. Would you characterize yourself as more of an introvert or an extrovert? What is your primary method of being disciplined, through meeting with people or through books and cassettes?
5. Can you think of any benefits to the use of books and cassettes, besides what the author mentioned about personality type?
6. Has God disciplined you alone in the wilderness? Share briefly any such experiences.