

Character in Discipleship

How can we be transformed to be available for leading others in the transformation journey of spiritual maturity in Christ?

Ewa Pieszka served as the national director of the Polish IFES movement (ChSA) for 14 years and was engaged in the movement's activities and mission from its very beginning. Evangelism and helping others in personal growth are the main areas of her work and engagement. She also frequently serves as a trainer and speaker at conferences, training events, and workshops. In one-to-one work with people, Ewa specialises in pastoral care, Christian counselling, mentoring, and life coaching. She is convinced that her personal relationship with God shapes her character and way of life. Ewa studied tourism management, Christian counselling, and coaching. She enjoys being a wife and the mother of three adult children. She also enjoys traveling, good books and music, and several different sports, a passion she shares with her husband, Mirek.

CONTENT 1:

Character can be defined as attributes or qualities that make up someone's personality and make us distinct and unique.

- What is God's character like? What is God's heart like?

God's character is of the highest integrity. He is perfect in every way. He will always do the right thing. He is holy, truthful, righteous, just; this is character in its truest form.

We need to allow the truth about God and His character to transform us. The more accurate our understanding of who God really is and how He is involved in our life, the more we will be able to become all He wants us to be and to impact and influence others.

- **Psalm 78:72** "And David shepherded them with **integrity of heart**; with **skillful-hands** he led them."
- **Acts 13:22** "God testified concerning David: I have found David son of Jesse, **a man after my own heart**; he will do everything I want him to do."

Making disciples of Christ is not only about equipping people with certain skills or training them for evangelism and then calling new disciples, it is rather the transformation of one's character into Jesus Christ's character. It is about assisting and enabling others (disciples) to open up to the power of the Holy Spirit who only can change and transform us into Christ likeness, "... until Christ is *fully* formed in us" (Galatians 4:19).

Learning Community 1:

Small group discussion on what people heard and what does it mean.

- Which traits of character are most important to me? Which of my experiences of studying the Word of God have shown me the characteristics of God's heart? Where do I see in myself growing in the resemblance to of Jesus Christ's character?
- Which of my traits allow others to notice God's presence?

CONTENT 2:

How are we ourselves transformed in our character – character of a leader (disciple maker)?

The apostles walked with Jesus for three years, but even they struggled to understand God's character. The night before Jesus was crucified, they asked him to show them the Father.

Responding to them, Jesus said: "He who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9)

- How were the disciples/apostles discovering the heart and character of God?
"... [Jesus] took off His outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round His waist. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet." (John 13:3-5)
- How do I discover God's character?
How would it be if Jesus sat among us right now? If you were one of the twelve? You take off your sandals, put your feet into a basin with water, and Jesus is kneeling next to you...

The leader whom God is using chooses to serve in attitude and action, is secure enough to empower others.

The **SECURE** leaders:

- ... Focus on towels,
- ... Draw strength from identity in Christ,
- ... Pursue service to others,
- ... Want to grow others in identity and maturity

Areas of my personal growth as a disciple-maker

Reasons why a "heart of integrity" is important to the disciple makers:

1. Leadership functions on the basis of **TRUST**,

2. Integrity has a high **VALUE** in influencing others,
3. Our tendency is to work harder on our **IMAGE** than on our integrity,
4. Integrity means **LIVING** the truth myself, before leading others,
5. A charismatic personality may draw people, but only **INTEGRITY** will keep them!
6. Integrity is a result of a **PROCESS**, not a gift!
7. Leaders are to live by a higher **STANDARD** than followers.

Discipleship process needs to be personalized:

Like **MOTHER** and like **FATHER**

1 Thessalonian 2:1-12

- Just as a nursing **MOTHER** cares for her children, (8) so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.
- (11) For you know that we dealt with each of you as a **FATHER** deals with his own children, (12) encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His Kingdom and glory.

Learning Community 2:

Individual reflection – write your responses here or where you keep notes:

- Do these 7 areas of a heart of integrity reflect my reality? Why yes, or why not?

- In what one or two areas do I need to grow most?

- What specifically does God need to change?

CONTENT 3:

How others' character is transformed through the discipleship process.

Do others, people whom we disciple, see that we are “after God’s heart” (Acts 13:22)?

In the process of change, transformation of one’s character, we want to be a right example, a role model. Apostle Paul writes to Timothy: “You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings...” (2 Timothy 3:10-11)

We need to have various approaches to different people. We need to learn to respect their

natural traits and styles of perception of things:

- Developing the *action person* ...
- Developing the *process person* ...

Philippians 1:6 "... He who began a good work in you [in **me**] will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Learning Community 3:

Question and Answer in large group.

- Which qualities of my character could be good examples for a person in the process of discipleship, whom I am taking care of by helping with their growth?

Discussion about application to local ministry