



EXCHANGING LIFE PUBLISHING
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Seven Phases: Having the Right to Minister

GAINING PERMISSION TO HELP

By Dr. Stephen Phinney

One of the most common misunderstandings in discipleship is assumption of permission. Believe me, I have stepped over this line one too many times. Just because someone is showing signs of needing help does not mean that he is granting you permission to disciple him. One of the key principles in management is that *expectation cannot be managed unless mutual agreements to such expectations are confirmed*. As soon as you begin helping a body member, you will quickly see that in order for you to be able to truly help him, he will need directives in order to allow the Truth to set him free (John 8:32). Since most (if not all) humans do not like being told what to do – the greatest conflict of resolution begins - *Who gave you permission to parent me?* Plus, most reach out for help with what they perceive as their need(s). Classically, these are “issues” they expect to be addressed and resolved by the discipler, sometimes in the first meeting. In reality, these issues may be the results of a lifelong habit of disobedience to God. There is also the possibility of him not even being saved, which might be God’s point. Thus, gaining an agreement of expectations is a very influential way of establishing “cattle rails” for the whole discipleship process.

First, there is the determining of expectations. Both the discipler (DR) and the disciplee (DE) learn what to expect from each other. Secondly, and most importantly, commitment is made to get to point “B.” A two-way commitment like this helps to *keep on keeping on* during times of temptation to quit. I have found this to be a crucial avenue for God to bring His Truth to bear on the real needs of a person’s life. True ministry frequently involves hard choices in the midst of fiery trials. When the two of you are in the middle of said furnace, that agreement is going to come in handy! Since the general attitude of our post-modern church is “*whatever*,” my prediction is that maintaining mutual agreement of assistance will be your greatest challenge throughout all the years of your discipling others. People, today, have worked their entire lives to have a cavalier attitude toward assignments and being told what to do. This is outright disobedience, and/or unreliability in being able to be managed or parented.

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17).

The truth of the matter is that when you decide to disciple someone, your name appears on heaven’s side and an accountability process is enacted. Most Christians suspect this and I believe this is why we see little true Christ-as-life discipleship going on these days. Everyone is pretty much left to believe and do what they want – I call it the Emergent church.

In the late 1970’s, a couple of us disciplers developed a fact sheet (agreement) called the *Right to Minister*. I have used it since those early days and typically, the times I have not, I was sorry. It is important to introduce this agreement early on in the process, particularly when it is time to start “telling them what to do.” Most of the time, I will bring this fact sheet out before the fourth

(4th) meeting. For example: I might hand it out in the 3rd meeting, ask the disciplee to carefully review it, and bring it back to the following session. It is during this session that I verbally read each paragraph and ask if he/she has any comments or questions about what I just read, and then go on to the next paragraph. Once I am done, I ask him to sign and date the agreement; then I sign the document. Now, we are ready to actually disciple. Sounds simple? Well, it is not. Many see the level of commitment they must give (particularly item #1) and withdraw from the discipleship process. That is OK, because there is a good chance the form helped him see he is not ready for true and long-term change. If and when this happens, ask him what it was on the form that hindered him from signing it. Allow him to share his reasons, explain to him why you cannot disciple him without an agreement, and then gracefully let him know that he may need a little more time for God to ready him for discipleship.

Here is a sample of the form I use:

IOM AMERICA - RIGHT TO MINISTER

Our discipleship exists to glorify God in and through the lives of its helpers and those who come for help. Our mission is to provide a unique, dynamic, Bible-based discipleship service that God can use to transform lives. Though the approach is not new, the unique methods used have been proven repeatedly to be effective. Our team presses on toward showing people how to be set free from enslaving mental and emotional conflicts through Scriptural teachings and consultations.

People come to us primarily through word-of-mouth. God working through this ministry accomplishes the significant changes in the lives of those who come for help. Our biblical disciplers/counselors are trained in the application of Scriptural Truth regarding the Exchanged Life – “Not I, but Christ.” Our workers do not necessarily hold degrees in psychology or are licensed by the state – which usually prohibits the application of Jesus Christ being the only way, truth and life (John 14:6). We do not take the position that all problems are “spiritual,” but do believe that most “presenting problems” have a basic spiritual factor.

You have come for Biblical Exchanged Life counseling/discipleship. We do not consider that we have the “right” to minister to you unless you give us that right. Please read the following statements and sign this form stating you accept the condition of ministry:

1. AREAS OF LIFE

We see biblical counseling/discipleship affecting seven areas of life: SPIRITUAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, FINANCIAL, MARITAL, and PARENTAL. Personal problems often overlap several of these areas. Therefore, we ask your permission to go into any or all of these areas to the degree necessary to come to a solution of the problem.

2. DIRECTIVE COUNSELING

While careful listening and empathy are a definite part of the ministry process, our biblical counsel is direct in nature. The style and approach to assisting needy people is straightforward and direct. Our goal is not to offend, but to use the strength of the Word to address the “issues” at large. This means that definite direction and assignments are given, which are based on the teachings and principles of the Scriptures.

3. CREDENTIALS

The word “counseling” is often associated with the idea of “licensed” counselors. We do not take the stand that “ministers of the Gospel” must be certified with a state agency to be qualified to administer counsel to the hurting. It should be understood that our ministry may or may not use “state certified” counselors/ministers to assist you.

4. NO DECISIONS

No decisions will be made for you. You are the one(s) who will decide what you will do with the teaching given. However, if there is persistence in ignoring the instruction given or a refusal to complete assignments, the question may be raised as to the advisability of continuing the biblical counseling process.

5. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

We do not charge for servicing you with the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:18). We do have a suggested rate of donation based upon individual sessions (see front desk personnel for details). IOM America is a 501c3 non-profit. We would be honored to receive gifts and donations to assist us in accomplishing our mission (see IOM America Financial Beliefs form).

6. TIME FACTOR

Each session lasts from 60 to 90 minutes. We do not have a definite minimum or maximum number of sessions required, but we will not keep you coming beyond a reasonable time. If outside help is needed in areas where other services have special expertise, referrals will be made.

7. APPARENT REGRESSION

It frequently happens (although not always) that as a person begins to follow biblical Christ-As-Life principles, the life experience may actually get worse. This is no reason to quit or think that you are not making progress. On the contrary, it may be an indication that you ARE making progress. When a person’s life situation is unmanageable, there is usually the need for unlearning and undoing certain things, so that progress can be made in a new direction. We mention this so that you will not be surprised and/or disheartened.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

We are committed to a rule of confidentiality regarding what is discussed. Certain qualifications, however, apply. Where further insight or guidance is needed, your discipler/counselor may consult with other IOM America team members. Secondly, where a crime has been or is being committed (particularly against a minor), it is required by law to report such activity. Further, knowledge of a threatened act of violence against someone also may be reported. Finally, when a counselor is ministering to multiple family members, there typically is an “overlapping” of counseling data that is exchanged.

When conducting “family/group counseling,” it is difficult to manage the personal data exchange. Your discipler is committed to encourage all group participants to keep the spoken data within the confines of the group. It needs to be understood that your discipler cannot be responsible for “gossip” within family or group members.

9. MUTUAL TERMINATION

We ask that you seriously consider the teaching given. If you decide not to continue your counseling, we ask that you follow the guidelines contained within the Scriptures and share your concerns with your counselor. First, share your concerns one-on-one before terminating, or bring a

third party into the process. These guidelines are set in place in order to resolve conflicts according to biblical guidelines. It is your discipler's desire for you to receive help, even if you choose not to use our services.

This fact sheet is not a legal document or commitment. If you sign it, you are granting your discipler (DR) permission to note *all* the above criteria is: 1) understood by you, 2) agreeable to and accepted freely by you as pertinent to the process of you allowing your discipler to assist you in your discipleship process.

Before starting the discipleship process with IOM America, you will need to sign the *Right to Minister* form, mail it to IOM America, or bring it in with you to your first session.

IOM America grants permission for you to use or revise this form for your own use.

"*Right to Minister Form*" IOM America, <http://iomamerica.blogspot.com/p/truly-christ-as-life-our-primary.html> (accessed Feb. 5, 2013).

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