

## Skill-Based Discipleship

By Bob Young

I am fond of reminding God's people that every Christian is a leader! In the same way, every Christian can be a coach! What can Christians do to become better leaders? How does one become an effective coach? How does a disciple of Jesus effectively disciple others?

Dr. Les Brickman (*Coaching Your Cell Apprentice to Greatness*) describes learning as it touches three aspects of life: "Learning most effectively occurs when all three domains of learning are being impacted: cognitive, psychomotor, and affective." Most training materials are cognitively based. Classes and sermons tend to be largely cognitive. Even when various communication tools are used, the primary goal is usually to cement something in the mind of the hearer. Those desiring training are told to read a book, read an article, listen to a CD or watch a video, attend a series of classes, or in some way increase their knowledge base. This is cognitive learning. A systematic, multi-dimensional approach to effective learning is rare in Christianity. Much discipleship training is limited to telling!

What distinguishes a leader? Leaders know something others do not; leaders can do things others cannot, leaders live life with a different set of feelings and attitudes. The leader has developed a knowledge set (cognitive), a skill set (psychomotor), and a heart set (affective) that others do not yet have. To transform the lives of Christians, we must address those three learning sets and create a system to develop these sets in followers of Christ.

Cognitive learning requires a teacher. Skill-based learning is done by coaching. The most effective training is skill based, not knowledge based. What do students do in a preaching class? They preach! When I taught evangelism at the university level, the students asked me what we were going to do in the class, and I immediately said, "We are going to evangelize!" A Bible class should train or coach people in how to handle the Bible. Most people learn best by doing.

Four steps are part of the effective coaching process. The first is that the coach acts out the skill with explanation. The second is that the student practices the skill with supervision and encouragement. The third is that the student practices the skill without hands-on coaching but with accountability for results. The fourth is that the student acts using the coach as a resource person when needed.

Training in discipleship, Christian disciplines, or Christian service is best done in a skill-based context. Skill-based learning touches all three learning domains. Not only is a skill developed, knowledge and understanding are increased and the heart is touched. The role of a coach is to help the learner do more than they could otherwise do on their own. New skills allow us to reach higher. We grow as we reflect on our experiences. When a person learns how to share faith or how to talk to others about Jesus, the heart is touched. Coaches know how to replace correction with encouragement. Accountability increase motivation.

Those leaders who have the greatest impact on others, the coaches who train effectively, the disciples who effectively disciple others, share a common perspective. The goal is helping others learn the skill while thinking clearly, making wise decisions, and assuming more and more responsibility for their own growth. This kind of leadership or coaching changes people from the inside out—genuine transformation.

Church leaders, preachers, ministers, Christians, parents! How much of your "teaching" is limited to cognitive learning? What are you doing that is skill-based so that all three learning domains are impacted simultaneously?