

A) Introduction:

Why should character matter to me? Scripture says that God looks at our hearts, understands us at our deepest level, and weighs our motives in what we say and do. This is what Jesus said we are accountable to God for. Character seems to matter to God. I think a better question for me to ask is “how can I cooperate with God’s Spirit to encourage my character development?” Christian missionary, YWAM director of communications, and author Landa Cope has some interesting things to say about how God uses His people to advance the Kingdom of God personally in our communities. The “Who am I and how can God use me?” question is not merely rhetorical. Though we seem inconsequential, a quick look at the people God used to change the world is enlightening. Landa observes of the Old Testament that:

“The men and women God used for great influence in the Kingdom were seldom people of status and power. Noah – a farmer; Abraham – an old man with a barren wife; Joseph – the despised youngest son of herders; Moses – a person raised in power and splendor but not of great use to God until he had lived for forty years as an outcast fugitive in the desert; David – the son no one remembered, a family outcast; Esther – a destitute orphan with no social status or means; Ruth – a widowed refugee with a penniless mother-in-law; Nehemiah – a slave-servant to a Pagan king; Daniel – an exiled boy with no means or freedom.” “The pattern continues in the New Testament as the Son of God comes to us not as the King of the Cosmos in all His splendor and glory, but as a lowly carpenter in a modest family from an insignificant village. Jesus chose ordinary working class men [as His disciples] to lay the foundation of the Church. And the architect of [New Covenant] evangelism, Paul – a man of great means, status, and education... reduced to a servant of all before he is used to build the Kingdom.”¹

Landa goes on to speak about the family as the central component of teaching and institutionalizing values and principles [character] into everyday life that will determine the quality of the culture [and nation]. It is living the Kingdom, being the Kingdom that will ultimately accomplish God’s mandate.

So, back to the question “how do we cooperate with what God’s Spirit is doing within us that we may take up our place and play our part in God’s cosmic drama working itself out in redemptive history?” I would argue that it involves developing relationships and being actively engaged in discipleship to grow as spiritual men and women. The role of the church is to equip men and women for ministry... God didn’t save us just to free us from hell, but to advance His Kingdom on earth now as His children. Therefore the relational context of coaches, mentors, and discipler’s are relational components God uses to prepare us for our life and ministry to transform us and our communities.

B) Part 1 – Biblical Basis of Coaching and Mentoring for Discipleship Development:

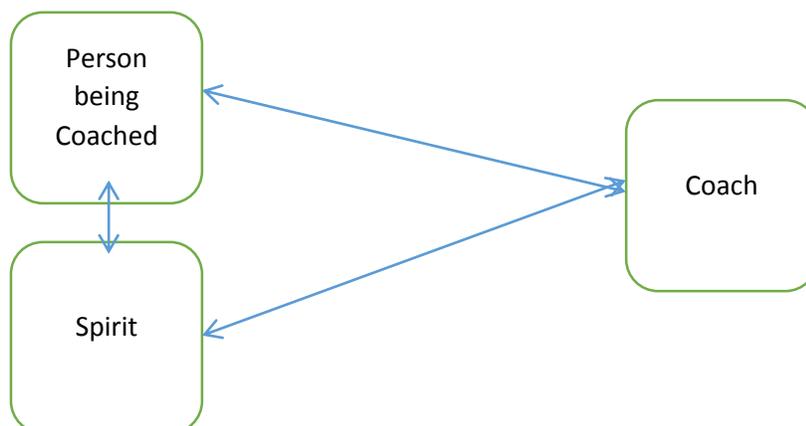
1. **Coaching:** *“A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water, but a man of understanding draws it out.”* (Proverbs 20:5) *“The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives.”* (Proverbs 16:1-2)
Coaching and Mentoring are both “one on one” discipling experiences. Although the Indwelling Spirit is the real discipler of all Christians; the role of the coach and/or mentor is to help disciples to understand and catch up with what God is already doing in their life and help guide their path. The disciple remains

¹ Landa Cope; *An Introduction to the Old Testament Template – Rediscovering God’s Principles for Discipling Nations*; YWAM Publishing, 2011

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responsibility for their own choices in working out the goals and objectives of their journey experience, but the coach/mentor can be helpful in keeping them focused, helping them better understand what they are experiencing, training and reorienting them, and to help prevent them from getting stuck in their journey progression.

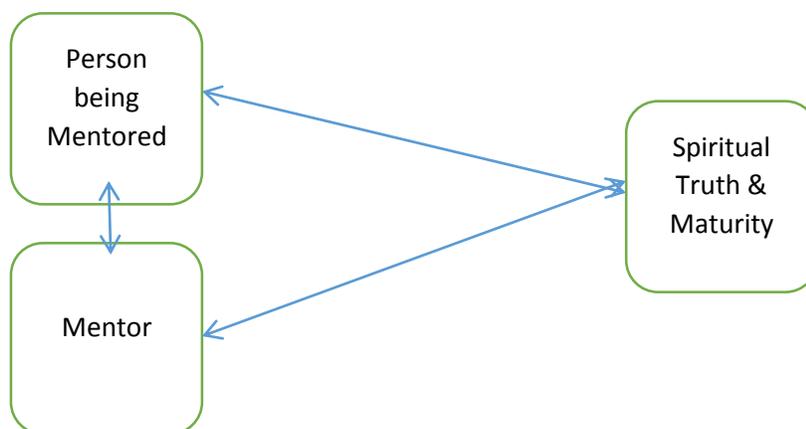
- a. Coaching involves:
 - i. Active listening – what do you hear God saying to you?
 - ii. Powerful/focused questions – helping you think through your actions; not telling you what to do.
 - iii. Insights to keep the dialogue moving – moving past the obvious of what is said to what is unsaid.
 - iv. Encourage insight and discovery – helping the person see what is going on so they can solve their own problems.
 - v. Spiritual encouragement – the Spirit is an active partner in all personal transformation.
- b. Coaching is a way to help draw out from the disciple what the HS has already deposited in them.
- c. Coaching involves the transformation of how the disciple thinks about their beliefs, behaviors, actions and results of their Journey. This is critical to how the disciple approaches what they do.
- d. A Biblical example of coaching would be of Jethro to his son-in-law Moses – see Ex 18:13-24. A coach comes alongside a person and helps them work through their blind spots. They do not accept responsibility for the person or the situation, but help them work through their difficulties in a supportive manner to enable them to accomplish more and perform at a higher level.
- e. The positional arrangement of a coach looks something like this... notice that the position of the coach is to help the person being coached see what the Spirit is doing and is already at work accomplishing in their Spiritual life. The coach is essentially saying “do you see what God is doing?”



2. **Mentoring:** Is a personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. However, true mentoring is more than just answering occasional questions or providing help when needed. It is about an ongoing relationship of learning, dialog, and challenge.
 - a. The person in receipt of a mentorship relationship may be referred to as a **protégé** or an **apprentice**. It is active investment by the mentor to allow the protégé to advance in their personal and professional development. Where coaching is more about awareness and insights, mentoring is a more active form of directing toward defined goals and objectives.
 - b. Mentoring" is a process that always involves communication and is relationship based.

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- c. Mentoring is a process for the ongoing transmission of knowledge and wisdom and may include:
 - i. Skill development
 - ii. Social developmental guidance
 - iii. Psycho-social support
 - iv. Personal and organizational insight.
- d. Mentoring may be relevant to work, career, or personal/spiritual development.
- e. Mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and over a sustained period of time.
- f. A Biblical example of mentoring is Paul with Timothy – see 1 Timothy 1:2, 18-19; 2:1-4. Most of Paul’s letters to Timothy revolve around advice given by the mature leader to make the young man a more competent leader.
- g. Mentors enable their protégé to more effectively fulfill their calling.
- h. The positional arrangement of a mentor looks something like this... note that the position of the mentor is to help guide the person being mentored to understanding what is going on in their Spiritual life. The mentor is essentially helping his apprentice to understand - “this is how it works” and “this is how you do it.”



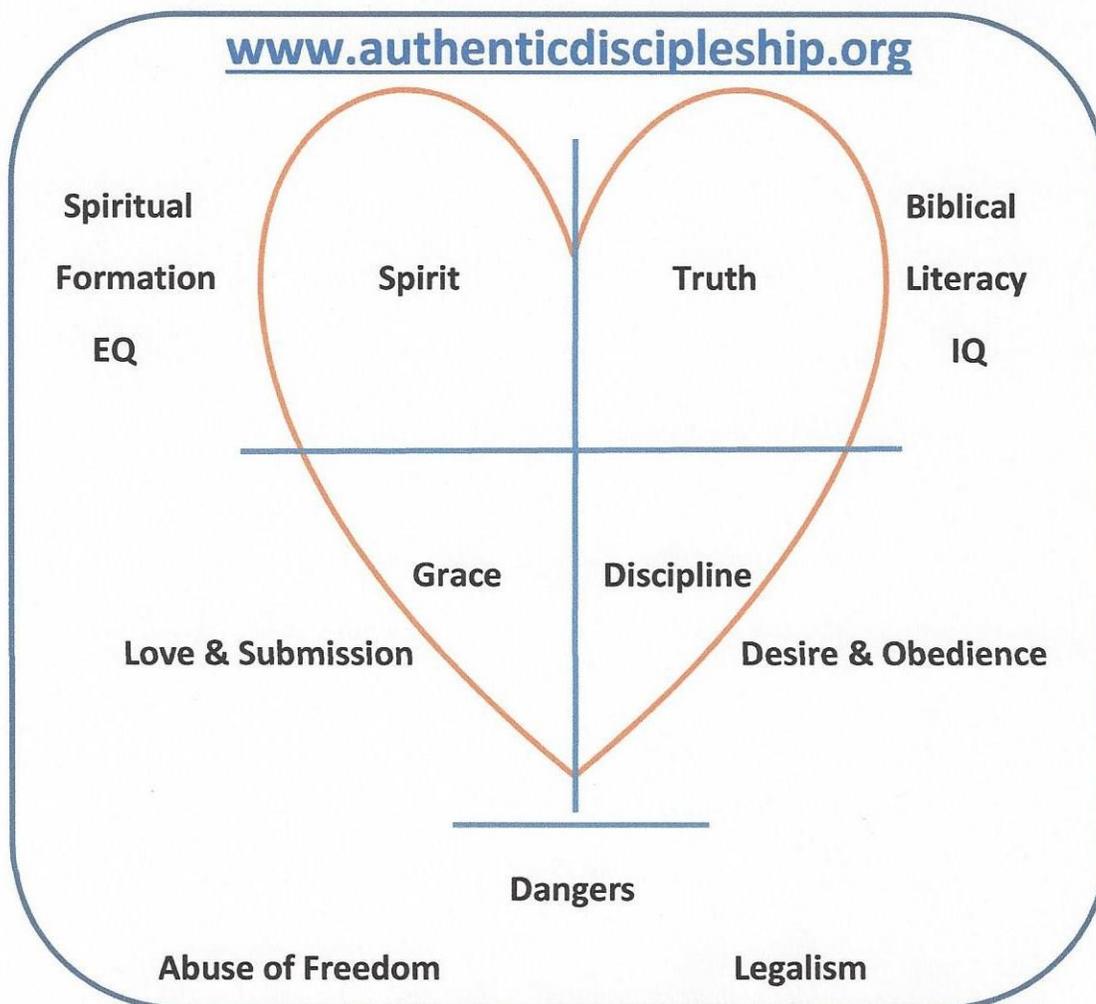
- i. For more on the subject and practice of coaching and mentoring, please refer to the link below to the www.authenticdiscipleship.org website - <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%204.1%20-%20Faith%20Coaching%20Fundamentals.pdf>

C) Part 2 – Discipleship as Group Fellowship:

1. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 discusses the difference of an individual and two or more in cooperative relational interaction in facing life’s challenges. Although our modern social sensibilities tends to favor the “rugged individualist” model of going it alone, this is not Christian discipleship which is much more relational and interactive. God did not intend that we would live or work alone but instead to live and work within a collaborative community of faithful supportive believers.
2. Small group fellowships involve 3-5 people in open, honest, intimate, and vulnerable relational engagement. These are most often same sex groups. Because personal and often sensitive matters may be revealed and discussed, it is imperative that the group covenants to be absolutely confidential in their discussions.
3. Medium group fellowship involve 10-14 and as many as 24 people in a casual home setting. These are most often mixed sex groups of married and single people. These groups are often called “Life Groups” or

alternatively “Home Fellowships” and are an excellent way to build authentic Christian community.

4. The problem with building authentic Christian communities in general is that we do so with depraved and fallen human beings. We each have our own flavor of dysfunction. While character always matters, my own character is never without flaw nor is this less true for any involved with me in this or any other project. Small and medium group environments are where I can take the time to explore and answer these questions about my character and motivations:
 - a. FEAR is a critical battleground for all leaders and followers... what am I afraid of?
 - b. PERSONAL LOSS and Wounding’s are another critical battleground for all leaders and followers... what weighs me down and prevents me from living and acting with confidence?
 - c. CLARITY OF MIND, VISION & HEART... we all need God’s supernatural discernment and strength to see and respond clearly into the world we live to offer the hope of Christ to others. Realizing I can’t give what I don’t have, and that I need to rediscover and reaffirm God’s Truth as it plays out in my life to make myself a better ambassador of Christ, these questions prompt the type of studies for these groups to embark upon:
 - i. What is my identity in Christ?
 - ii. What natural and Spiritual gifts do I have and how can I develop them?
 - iii. What passion has God ignited in me?
 - iv. What invitation am I hearing from Him?
 - v. What do I need to get prepared to move forward with greater confidence?
5. Philippians shows that the highest calling of Christian Discipleship is to “trust and obey”... whereby we are being progressively transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2-8) to reflect the character of God... who is at His core a Lover and a Servant. The hard thing for us to grasp, is that by serving others, we are actually set free in the process. By serving others we learn to love them with the love God has for us. This is true because God loves the people we serve. If you doubt or are not experiencing God’s love personally and vitally, you will struggle loving others as God loves them having to rely on your own strength, and you will come up short.
 - a. **Trust** – Phil 1:6 demonstrates that God’s invitation into faith and ministry is always guaranteed by God’s promise to perfect us. My effort should be more about understanding and cooperating with what the Spirit is already doing in my life and in my community.
 - b. **Obedience** – Phil 2:12-13 demonstrates how spiritual vitality is engaged and set free in me. The critical key is knowing and experiencing the Greatness of God. Once this becomes real and vital, and not merely something we read or someone told us... when we truly believe it, it changes us. [See AD article on Spiritual Vitality Philippians 2:12-13 article SF 1.3 Prayer Practicum 1.3 Developing Spiritual Vitality [<http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/2-spiritual-formation/Spiritual%20Disciplines/SF%201.5%20Prayer%20Practicum%203%20-%20Developing%20Spiritual%20Vitality.pdf>]]
6. The Christian life is one of balance as depicted in the following “Heart Cross” diagram. Small and medium groups are where these concepts can be explored in an open and confidential environment, and where I can receive help and encouragement to press on.



The “Heart-Cross” Diagram depicting Spiritual Life in Balance. Human Hearts have 2 halves and 4 chambers, and are fully functional when all are working together.

The context of a discipling community including a coach or mentor is where we can discuss and discover:

- a. What is out of balance or alignment in my own life?
- b. What do I need to pursue to create a more balanced faith and life?
- c. Who will partner with me to help keep me aligned and motivated?
- d. How can I more effectively serve others?

D) Part 3 – Christian Character Development:

1. A Christian’s Integrity is communicating on the outside what exists and is going on in the inside of the disciple. It is in the crucible of relational engagement where I can discover what God is up to in my life. Christian Character is being consistent in demonstrating both who we are and who we serve in humility. God has invited us into a loving relationship with Him, with the expressed purpose that we would engage in authentic community with fellow believers and then to serve His people in advancing the Kingdom of God. This is the nature of the Great Commission. It is a great joy when we are being refreshed by the Spirit who is continually flowing through every disciple’s heart, and then inviting and allowing others to be

refreshed as well. When we operate in our own strength we'll tire and run dry. The Spirit dependent approach is where we are continually renewed and refreshed.

- a. Spiritual Character – involves Jesus' character and nature being formed within the disciple where we increasingly reflect the image our Lord Jesus (Imago Christi). The term "Christian" was a term of derision used by the Romans in the 1st century AD. It means "little Christ." This term is in fact the badge of honor every believer ought to seek to display in their life.
 - b. Dependence upon God and openness to others develops humility, humility develops integrity, and integrity develops character, and character develops courage... this is an ongoing developmental process. Dependence and humility are key components because it gets me past my own strength and self-interest where I can see the needs of those we serve as being as important as my own.
 - c. Courage is not the absence of fear... instead it is the absence of self. Courage is doing God's will as He asks for it, and not necessarily in doing what we want in our own strength. Courage is not needlessly placing ourselves in harm's way, though occasionally God will ask us to do so. Wisdom asks us to count the cost, and courage invites us to stand on principled faith wherever God has placed us.
 - d. James 1:2-4 – "consider it all joy...." Wisdom is born out of obedience. Obedience is born out of trials. Strength and courage are the result of standing confidently in faith believing.
 - e. Trials come because the truths you know and believe will necessarily rub up against life's challenges and problems. This is where we need to do the little things, day by day in humble, faithful, prayerful dependence and obedience.
 - f. As we obey in the little things, we become more faithful in the bigger things... and new life patterns emerge... and God's Character becomes more clearly established in me. When we see it in ourselves, we model it to others... who can then look for it in themselves.
2. The relationships within small and medium groups, as well as coaches and mentors are all means of relational development where people I know and trust, and who know me well, are able to more properly keep me motivated and aligned with God and His plans for my life.
 3. Biblical Literacy (Truth) and Spiritual Formation (Spirit Life) both develop and sustain our passion for God. We each need to learn to "guard our hearts" by keeping fresh our love and devotion to God. God will use and bless whatever it is we give Him, but to love Him is to bring Him our best, and we can't do that if we are not being refreshed and our Spirit life sustained.
 4. A major component of discipleship is knowing God's Word... Biblical Literacy is understanding how the Bible communicates and to engage the text on its terms that we may "draw out the author intended meaning" (exegesis) and Spiritually grow as a result. The process of this is known as "Hermeneutics" and there are three articles on this subject on my website. The first of these is on the link below – <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/1-biblical-literacy/Interpreting%20Scripture%20-%20Part%201.pdf> . For example many might presume to read and study Scripture as if it were any other book. Reading it is always a good thing, but without understanding the historical, cultural, and relationship of the text to the development of Biblical Redemptive History – how God has revealed Himself and has purposefully guided humanity from the Fallen creation into the New Heaven and Earth, I am getting only a

small portion of the picture. Here are a just a few insights to help explain this dynamic:

- a. Ancient Hebrew and early Christian Culture was based upon an extended familial view; whereas Modern Western Culture is based upon an enlightened individualistic view of history.
 - b. Ancient Hebrew and early Christian Culture was based upon an “Honor and Shame” view of personal responsibility; whereas Modern Western Culture is based upon a “legal and illegal” view, and increasingly a guilty or not guilty view. People tend to deny the most obvious things, presuming that until proven guilty they are without responsibility. This is certainly not the environment into which Scripture speaks most effectively... we need to be honest with ourselves and God about our wrongdoing and shortcomings.
 - c. The Jewish Culture was based upon the Mosaic Law which was a mandate for all humanity as decreed by God, this view was subject to some local interpretation but it was considered fixed and eternal. Modern Western Culture is based on Laws that are developed by humanity, and are subject to ongoing interpretation and change and thus are continually evolving.
 - d. Honor and shame make sense in the context of an eternal unchanging law and value structure, where everybody has a fixed frame of reference; and because it's fixed each person knows when they have violated the law.
 - e. Legal and illegal make sense in a culture of constant value changes and laws that reflect the changing cultural environment; because it's constantly changing the law of the moment applies. Further, in Western Culture it is presumed that if you cannot be proven guilty it is understood no law was broken. So people think they can do what they know to be wrong but if it remains unrevealed and indeterminate, people make the wrongful presumption that no sin was committed.
 - f. Christian ethics holds to a much higher standard...where our inner-life comes under scrutiny by the Spirit. This is what Jesus was teaching about in His extended teaching in The Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5:1-7:28. Inner-life development is a necessary by-product of the presence of the indwelling Spirit – Galatians 5:16-25.
5. Christian ethics holds to a much higher standard than worldly ethics...where our inner-life comes under scrutiny by the Spirit. This is what Jesus was teaching about in His extended teaching in The Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5:1-7:28. Inner-life development is a necessary by-product of the presence of the indwelling Spirit – Galatians 5:16-25.
6. Biblical Character Exercises – these interactive questions are intended for individuals, couples, small and medium group discussion – how do these show up in your life:
- a. Do you consider yourself a “Great Lover?” Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 – listed are positive character traits (what love is) and negative character traits (what love is not). Evaluate yourself honestly with “unflinching analysis.” How do you stack up in this character analysis in how you regularly express love? Would your wife/significant other, family, and close friends agree? What needs to change? Refer to the following link to Authentic Discipleship.org to see how God intended to employ marriage as a means to personal and relational transformation:
<http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/2-spiritual-formation/Spiritual%20Maturity/SF%202.3%20-%20Marriage%20and%20Transformation.pdf>

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- b. Do you consider yourself “Spiritually Mature?” Christian maturity is about surrendering to God and submitting to one another out of love. Spiritually mature disciples demonstrate Jesus’ Character traits developing in their life.
- Read Ephesians 4:14-5:2 – Specifically, where do you observe “Christ Likeness” emerging in your character? What elements need to be encouraged and what needs to change?
 - Read Ephesians 5:3- 21 – which is about resisting darkness and holding onto the light... meaning rejecting evil, wickedness, salacious behaviors in favor of acting in love and ethical/moral purity, which are signs of Jesus’ character formation.
 - Read Ephesians 5:22-33 – which is about husbands and wives. Does your wife/husband feel loved in this manner?
 - Read Ephesians 6:1-6:9 – which is about parents and children and workers in the work force. Do your children know you love them because of the character you display on a regular basis?

Refer to the following link to Authentic Discipleship.org for more on Spiritual Maturity and Character Transformation: <http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/2-spiritual-formation/Spiritual%20Maturity/SF%202.1%20Maturity%20of%20a%20Disciple.pdf>

- c. Do you live more consistently in the Spirit or in the flesh? Read Galatians Chapter 5.
- Verses 19-21 list negative Spiritual Character traits; verses 22-26 list positive Spiritual Character traits.
 - Are these “Fruits of the Spirit” developing in your life? What do you see in yourself? What do others see in you? What needs to be encouraged, and what needs to change?
Refer to Authentic Discipleship.org for more on this topic:
<http://www.authenticdiscipleship.org/pdfs/3-leadership-dev/LD%20-%202.3%20-%20Discipling%20Church%20Leaders.pdf>
- d. Study the Psalms – the Psalms are all about engaging God in real and vital ways, the result of such engagement is transformational life.
- e. Study Proverbs – the Proverbs are all about obtaining wisdom and developing Godly character.
- f. The 10 Commandments – are elements of character development, not merely a list of what to do or not to do. As you more consistently press into God and are transformed by Him, a more consistently Godly lifestyle will emerge.

7. David Brooks in his book [The Road to Character](#), discusses what he calls the “Humility Code” – which presents a counter cultural approach to meaning in life.
- The Problem – every society establishes the “rules of engagement” whereby a set of norms, assumptions, beliefs, and habits of behavior from which the institutionalized set of moral demands emerge organically.
 - Propositions of the Humility Code:
 - We don’t live for happiness, we live for holiness. The best life is oriented around the increasing excellence of the soul and is nourished by moral joy, the quiet sense of gratitude

- and tranquility that comes as a byproduct of successful moral struggle.
- ii. Proposition i defines the goal of life.
 - iii. Although we are flawed creatures, we are also splendidly endowed... both fearfully and wonderfully made.
 - iv. Pride is the central vice.
 - v. Once the necessities for survival are satisfied, the struggle against sin and for virtue is the central drama of life. No external conflict is as consequential or as dramatic as the inner campaign against our own deficiencies.
 - vi. Character is built in the course of your inner confrontation. Character is a set of dispositions, desires, and habits that are slowly engraved during the struggle against your own weakness.
 - vii. The things that lead us astray are short term – lust, fear, vanity, gluttony. The things we call character endure over the long term – courage, honesty, humility.
 - viii. No person can achieve self-mastery on their own... everyone needs redemptive assistance for God, family, friends, ancestors, rules, traditions, institutions, and exemplars.
 - ix. We are all ultimately saved by Grace.
 - x. Defeating weakness often means quieting the self.
 - xi. Wisdom starts with epistemological modesty.
 - xii. No good life is possible unless it is organized around a vocation.
 - xiii. The best leader tries to lead along the grain of human nature rather than go against it.
 - xiv. The person who successfully struggles against weakness and sin may or may not become rich and famous, but that person will become mature.

E) Conclusion:

The point of Christian ethics is personal transformation giving rise to community transformation. Richard Rohr observes – “For Paul, community is the living organism that communicates the Gospel message. Paul [not unlike Jesus] wants to change culture not just send people away to a far off heaven! If Christ's cosmic message doesn't take form in a concrete group of people then, as far as Paul is concerned, it is an unbelievable message. An autonomous Christian is as impossible as an independent arm or leg. It will never work. Arms and legs exist only as parts of something greater. Believers exist as parts of the *Whole*, the Body of Christ. Their very existence is the state that Paul calls love. Their existence is love. When Paul says ‘without love I am nothing’ (1 Corinthians 13:2), he implies that he is inside of another Being who is Love. We train for this by loving real, live people. For Paul, this is what he means by living for *Christ*: the participatory mystery of Jesus continued through space and time *in us!*”²

² Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation of April 7, 2015.