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Coalition for Evangelism

Ministry, Christian Life / Enrique Oriolo

Who is asking you the difficult questions?

Who is making difficult and uncomfortable questions in your life? Who is getting into sensitive issues? Who is evaluating you week after week? Who is asking you about your sexual purity? Who is investigating your marriage and the upbringing of your children?

These questions can drive anyone crazy and make it run to the opposite direction at full speed. But, believe it or not, the one who has the courage to make them is someone who has the courage to love you despite how you will react to them. Yes, some people think that such a person is a "metiche" or that they are poking their noses where it does not concern them. But such direct questions can be life-saving for our spiritual life in the midst of a shipwreck, and are necessary to carry out the mission of making disciples (Mt 28: 18-20).

Discipleship is more than information

I understood discipleship in a very academic way. "Let's sit down, did you bring your Bible? Take this photocopy, read it, answer the questions, did you understand the subject? Any request? Let's pray, goodbye." In my mind discipleship simply consisted of transmitting information from a sender to a receiver, and then making sure the receiver understood the message to be communicated, and retained it (at least those minutes). If that is successful: Congratulations, I am an exemplary discipler!

But this is the question that must be asked: what does Christian discipleship biblically mean? The right answer: to teach others to be like Christ (Eph 4: 11-13). And being like Christ is not just about believing the right things (sound doctrine) but about practicing and living the right things that I have learned (healthy practice). "Who will know his own errors?" King David cried to God (Ps 19:12). We were not designed to live as individual beings floating in the universe and growing in quarantine. We were designed to live in community, and so that the process of sanctification (being like Christ) is a task of community (see Ephesians 4:16). Can one member dispense with another? Can we tell a member that we do not need it? Can we endure, love, teach, exhort, encourage and comfort others if we live isolated from the body? Not at all! We were created to live the Christian life in community (Ro 12: 5).

Discipleship is a task in community

The local church is that, a community of believers in a physical place in common, who have decided together to run the race of faith, and to love and help one another on that journey. Even when? Until the race is over, either by going to the presence of God, or Christ coming back sooner. One thing is certain: we seek the sanctity of the Body seeking the sanctity of each member. Difficult questions are necessary in a society that wants to mold us to superficiality, to the generic response of "I'm fine, thank you". We need to go deeper, seeing if Christ really is being formed in the heart of each member. And to reach the heart, you have to remove the outer layer.

Discipleship relationships should be aimed at the heart. Before being born, sin is conceived in the heart (James 4: 1), and there we seek to apply all possible defenses to the attack of temptations. One man asks another: how are you loving your wife and leading her? One woman asks another: how are you loving your husband and your children at this stage? We ask a young man: how are you about your sexual purity, both in your eyes and in your thoughts? And I think the most obvious pattern should be this: I really care whether or not you are growing in the image of Christ (1 John 3:18), and I want to collaborate to make that happen by asking the hard questions that you can reveal aspects of the heart and help you to battle, grow, and continue faithfully in the path of holiness. That's love. That is discipleship.

And now what do I do?

If today there is no one in your life asking the difficult questions, or you are not doing yourself to others, you begin the first step. You do not have to do a course or anything like that. Ask others in your church to ask you about intimate aspects of your life, to ask you every time they see you, to get together weekly and to be accountable to each other in your spiritual life. The sanctity of the church is not a duty of the pastor: it is a duty of each member that conforms it. It is not the pastor, but all of us, who were called with the authority of Jesus to go and make disciples by teaching them all that Christ has commanded us. It is not the pastor, but all of us who were called to holiness. Who will you seek to love this week and ask difficult questions?