



Gathering Data

Data gathering is an extremely vital element of discipling. The more information you can gather about your disciple, the better equipped you are to help him identify his problems and apply scriptural solutions to them.

Data can uncover motivations, trace problems to their origin, and reveal previously hidden sin. This study will help you understand principles of data gathering.

I. Types of data

A. Core data

1. Information given on the *Personal Data Inventory* form
2. Data which is verbally shared by your disciple
3. Data that is revealed through his lifestyle
4. Observations of how he interacts with you during the sessions
5. Written data gathered from logs, lists and other written assignments given as homework
6. Medical data

B. Nonverbal data

1. Body language
2. Facial expressions
3. Voice inflections and tone

II. Types of questions and descriptive information

A. Initial questions

1. **“What is your problem?” or “What brings you here?”**
 - a. The answer to this question is called the “Presentation Problem,” which is usually the “felt need” that encouraged him to seek help, but it is usually only the “tip of the iceberg.”
 - b. The presentation problem is rarely the *root* of the problem.
 - c. There is usually far more that the disciple will share of his life when he comes to trust you.
2. **“What have you done about your problem?”**
 - a. One of the most frequent responses is, “I’ve prayed about it.”
 - b. Prayer is important, but prayers must be followed with biblical *action*. (John 14:15)
3. **“What are your goals in the discipling process?”**
 - a. The answer is *crucial*.
 - 1) The discipler may have differing goals or expectations of what is to be accomplished during the counseling.

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- a) The disciple's goals are often self-oriented to obtain security, happiness, acceptance or freedom from problems. For example:
 - (1) "My spouse has to change."
 - (2) "My goal is for you to restore my broken marriage."
 - (3) "I want to get out of this difficult situation."
 - b) The discipler should be prepared to respond biblically to goals that are self-oriented. See *Pursuing Biblical Goals, CTO* for an expansion.
 - (1) Help the disciple to set goals that will
 - (a) focus on building his own relationship with Christ.
 - (b) focus on being responsible for his godly actions and attitudes in relationship to others, regardless of how he is treated.
 - (c) help him understand the biblical call to suffer. (Phil. 1:29)
 - (2) Help the disciple to set godly personal goals *that do not require the responses of others*.
 - (a) "I will follow God by trying to be a loving husband/wife to my spouse, regardless of his/her responses."
 - (b) "I will follow God by forgiving and unconditionally loving my child, regardless of his rebellious attitudes."
 - 2) The discipler must explain his goals, which are God's goals, early in the discipling process.
 - 3) The presentation and explanation of *The Self-Life* and *The Surrendered Life* diagrams from *The Controllers*
 - a) may be given in the first several sessions...long before he is assigned *The Controllers* studies.
 - b) may be very helpful to the disciple in establishing God's goals early in the discipling process.
 - b. The disciple may say, "I don't know," in response to this question.
 - 1) Accept his answer.
 - 2) Nothing is gained by asking leading questions or putting words into the disciple's mouth.
- B. Questions that help to determine his relationship to God
1. Ask the questions: "Are you sure you are going to heaven? Why would God let you into His heaven?"
 - a. His answers determine whether he is trusting Christ's finished work on the Cross or his own works for salvation. Answers to the second question, such as the following, indicate he is relying on his own works:

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- (1) “because I love God.”
 - (2) “because I am a good person.”
 - b. His lack of understanding of the gospel may be indicated by his answering, “I don’t know.”
 - c. His need for the verbal presentation of *God’s Plan of Salvation, CTO* will be evident from the answers he gives.
 - d. You may desire to give the unbeliever studies your church recommends or, *Essentials of the Faith*, but do not continue the CTO discipling process with an unbeliever.
2. Evaluate from the data gathered whether to share the gospel verbally with a *professing Christian* who has given biblical answers to the diagnostic questions.
- a. The disciple may have *no evidence* of a spiritual regeneration although views himself as a Christian, because of external actions or emotional experiences, such as:
 1. praying “the sinner’s prayer.”
 2. saying, “I accepted Jesus as my savior.” (Ask him what he means by that statement.)
 3. responding to an altar call.
 4. having cried or felt “warm fuzzies” when he heard the gospel.
 5. having had a brief period of a change in response to the gospel, but returned to an entrenched, unrepentant lifestyle.
 - b. Ask him how his life has changed after his profession of faith in Christ. (1 Cor. 5:17)
 - c. Inconsistencies in the disciple’s declaration of salvation vs. his lifestyle may be evident early in the discipling or they may unfold over a period of time in discipling.

Note: Through initial data-gathering, you may wonder if your disciple may give the facts of the gospel and believe he is saved, even when there is no fruit and changed life. Based on his profession of faith, you can begin the CTO discipling process though you may seriously doubt that he possesses the indwelling Holy Spirit who produces repentance and change. A number of people who began discipleship believing they were saved, *actually* were regenerated sometime in the process.
 - d. The following situations should alert you to the possibility of your disciple not fully understanding the gospel.
 - 1) The disciple does not recognize his sinful nature.
 - 2) The disciple is not experiencing the Holy Spirit’s work of conviction and repentance. (John 16:8; Acts 11:18b; 2 Cor. 7:9,10)
 - 3) The disciple has lived a lifestyle in unrepentant sin for years while professing to be a Christian. (Matt. 7:21-23; 1 John 2:3-6; 1 Cor. 5:17)

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- 4) The disciple has no desire to obey Christ. (John 14:15; Luke 9:23)
- 5) He continues to focus on others' sins and to blame others for his own sin, or he minimizes and ignores his sin.
 - a) He seems to be saying, "Others need a Savior."
 - b) He seems to be saying, "I do not need a Savior because others are responsible for my sin," or "I don't sin."
- e. If the above situations characterize the disciple, it should alert you to the possibility that he is unregenerate. If progress is not made after a period of discipling,
 - 1) do not tell the disciple he is not a Christian. Only God can judge his heart.
 - 2) do tell him that you are concerned about his salvation.
 - 3) give reasons for your concerns.
 - 4) encourage him to examine his salvation in the light of scriptural truths. (2 Cor. 13:5)

C. Understand as the discipler, that it is possible to make a profession of faith and to follow Christ for a short time but be unregenerate. (Mark 4:1-8, The Parable of the Sower)

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"
Matt. 7:21-23

"The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."
1 John 2:4-6

- D. Questions such as "How?," "What?," "Where?," "When?," "How often?"
1. Use frequently to gather data.
 2. Avoid "Why?" questions unless you have a disciple who understands what motivates him.
 3. Avoid questions that require just "Yes" or "No" answers, unless you need a specific answer to a pointed question.
- E. Information that is descriptive such as,
1. "Describe your relationship with God."
 2. "Describe your relationship with your _____ (girlfriend, spouse, children)."

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3. "Name three things you appreciate about your spouse."
4. "Name three things you would like to see changed in your spouse."
5. "Describe your relationship with _____ (peers, siblings, schoolmates, friends, fellow employees)."

F. Questions to get to the source of the problem

1. "When did your problem begin?"
2. "What triggered the onset of your problem?"

G. Questions to get a childhood overview

1. "How did your parents approach their problems?" (role-modeling)
2. "Describe how your parents related to one another."
3. "Describe your relationship with _____ (father, mother, school teachers, pastor, employer)." These may uncover authority related problems.
4. "How did you respond when _____ (mother, father, etc.) offended you?"
 - a. God holds children accountable. (Prov. 20:11; Eph. 6:1-3)
 - b. God holds a person accountable for the right responses in the face of sinful acts against him. (1 Pet. 2:19)
 - c. God holds everyone, child or adult, accountable even if they are unaware they sinned. (Lev. 5:17)

III. Movement from generalities to specifics in questioning

A. A wise discipler will ask for specific data when generalizations are given.

1. "My father made sexual advances toward me."
Discipler: "Describe the sexual advances."
2. "My mother abused me."
Discipler: "Tell me specifically how she abused you."

B. A wise discipler will get the facts! Do not jump to conclusions on scanty information or the disciple's definition, which may differ from yours.

IV. Data gathering without permitting "venting" or shifting blame

- A. Gather enough data to understand the problem.
- B. Show loving concern without promoting self-pitying attitudes.
- C. Focus on the disciple and his sinful initiatives and responses to those who offended him, rather than allowing the disciple to *focus* on the sins of others.
- D. Do not allow repeated "venting;" it is not scriptural! It escalates anger in the disciple when permitted or encouraged. (Eph. 4:31)
- E. Change the focus from the offender to the disciple. Do not permit blameshifting to become a pattern. For example:
 1. "We cannot deal with your father's problem because he is not here."

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2. "Let's see how God wants to change *you* and equip *you* to glorify Him in this difficulty."
3. "God holds you accountable as an individual, apart from your spouse's influence." (Gen. 3:17)
4. "God holds you accountable to *respond* in a godly way to someone who sins against you." (1 Pet. 2:19-23; Eph. 4:30-32)

V. Godly communication in data gathering

- A. Speak wisely and graciously. See *Communication, CTO*.
- B. The discipler is to be an involved listener. See *The Poor Listener/The Good Listener Chart, CTO*, for details.
 1. Good eye contact
 2. Appropriate responses that draw a disciple out and do not judge or intimidate him
 3. Sustained interest and concern for problems
- C. The discipler's *silence* may be an effective counseling tool.
- D. The discipler should **wait** for a response from the disciple when a question is asked.
 1. *Expect* responses to your questions.
 2. Do not rush in with "possible" answers or leading questions instead of waiting for a response.
- E. Do not allow someone else who is accompanying the disciple to answer questions addressed to the disciple and vice-versa, such as husband for a wife or parent for a child.

VI. Pitfalls in data gathering

- A. Beware of "leading questions" where the discipler feeds the disciple questions that are easy to agree with, rather than asking him to give his own opinion.
- B. Avoid "putting words" into the disciple's mouth by attributing *your* assumptions to him. For example:
 1. "I'm sure you think..."
 2. "You must have felt..."
- C. Avoid vague terms, street language and clichés that may have one interpretation to the discipler and another to the disciple.
 1. When he uses a term that you do not grasp, ask what his definition is.
 2. If you use such terms, be sure to define them for your disciple.

VII. Medical data

- A. Physical problems can have a bearing on emotional and behavioral status. For example:
 1. Hyperactivity
 2. Hypoglycemia

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3. Hormones: menstrual cycle, pregnancy, menopause
 4. Chemical and/or nutritional imbalances (vitamins, minerals, diet)
 5. Diseases, injuries and other physiological difficulties
- B. Be sure your disciple has contact with a physician when physical symptoms may be involved.
- C. Some disciples may be on prescribed medication for emotional problems.
1. The internet is a helpful resource for the discipler to understand side effects of specific drugs.
 2. **Never advise or suggest that someone stop using a prescribed medication.**
- D. When the disciple believes he is ready to discontinue a medication, advise him to seek a physician's counsel to avoid side effects and other problems that can be related to the cessation of the use of the drug.

Note: There may be cases in which a disciple desires to follow God and continually tries, but little to no progress is made over a long period. Perhaps the discipler needs to discern if demonic activity is having a significant impact on the disciple. Satanic influences, footholds and strongholds may need to be addressed if disciples are *entrenched* in paranoia, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity, self-condemnation, uncommon or addictive thoughts and behaviors. However, even in those cases, the Christ and His Word must be the focus rather than Satan and demons.

Personal Data Inventory

Date _____

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Zip _____

Birth Date _____ Anniversary _____

Raised by Both parents Other _____

Brothers: # older _____ # younger _____ Sisters: # older _____ # younger _____

Marital Status: Single Married Separated Divorced Widowed Remarried _____

Number of times married _____

Place of Employment _____ Position _____

Religious Background _____

Church Attendance (location) _____

Regular Sporadic Never

Assurance of Salvation: No Yes When _____

Prayer Time: Regular Sporadic Never

Bible Study: Regular Sporadic Never

With a Group? No Yes Where? _____

Referred by: _____

Spouse's Name _____ Birth Date _____

Place of Employment _____ Position _____

Religious Background _____

Church Attendance (location) _____

Willing to attend sessions? Yes No Uncertain

Children:

Name	Sex	Age	Grade	Living... Home/Where?

List major illnesses, injuries, handicaps: _____

List hospitalizations: _____

Previous counseling/therapy (dates/locations): _____

Medications presently using: _____

<u>Physical Symptoms</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>	<u>Never</u>
PMS Symptoms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hypoglycemia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bronchitis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sinus infections	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tonsillitis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Headaches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Backaches	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stomach pain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<u>Physical Symptoms</u>	<u>Frequently</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>	<u>Never</u>
Smoking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alcohol consumption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tranquilizers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outbursts of temper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Depression	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recent weight loss	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recent weight gain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sleeping problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting to sleep	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staying asleep	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oversleeping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<u>Emotional Patterns</u>	<u>Cause</u>	<u>With Whom</u>
Emotional pain	_____	_____
Indecision	_____	_____
Guilt	_____	_____
Fear	_____	_____
Frustration	_____	_____
Anger	_____	_____