

WHY A TEACHABLE SPIRIT IS ESSENTIAL FOR EVERY DISCIPLE

By John
In Disciple

3 Min read



“Let the wise hear and increase in learning,
and the one who understands obtain guidance.” — *Proverbs 1:5*

Watching my dad hang wallpaper was a beautiful sight to behold. First, he would enter the bedroom to change clothes and return suited up: old Florsheim shoes—black, white socks, work pants—rolled cuffs, t-shirt—white, Camel cigarette—behind the ear. He was now ready to do battle. He would move the furniture from the room, roll up the rug, and set the dining table as his workbench. He would then strike reference marks around the room every 20 1/2" apart (the width of a standard roll of wallpaper, if you were wondering why the 1/2-inch measurement). Next, he cut every piece of wallpaper needed to cover the entire room, pasted each piece, securely rolled and numbered them, and set them aside. After sticking the first piece in position, he would remount the ladder, grabbing a towel in one hand and his plumb bob in the other. The task now ahead of him was to ensure the first piece hung perfectly vertical to the plumb line—from there, around the room, he would paper.

Looking back, I wish I had realized I was in the presence of a wallpaper-hanging Jedi Master, showing me the proper way to paper a room. My dad was quietly sharing his wisdom without speaking a word.

Older men show what it looks like to follow Jesus when no one is applauding—how they serve, listen, and stay faithful over time. They're living out their faith rather than just talking about it.

APPLICATION

A teachable spirit isn't about being inexperienced. It's understanding there's still ample room for growth, no matter how old we are or how much we've accomplished or acquired. A teachable spirit assumes a learning posture rather than ignorance or a stiff neck, as mentioned many times in the Old Testament, which prevents growth.

Proverbs 1:5 reinforces that wisdom grows when a man recognizes who he's learning from and chooses guidance over independence.

Discipleship works the same way. Information is easy to observe from a distance, but formation requires proximity, humility, and trust. A teachable spirit shows up when a man stops doing it his way and allows someone who's walked the road longer to shape how he walks it now.

LIVE IT OUT

The experienced paperhangers in your church won't always be obvious. They're rarely the loudest voices or the most visible leaders. Look for the men who take the long view, serve without needing credit, handle Scripture with care, show patience with people, and submit quietly to authority.

Then don't just admire them—move closer. Watch how they pray, how they speak, how they respond when plans change, or pressure rises. Pay attention to the small, ordinary ways they walk with God when no one's watching.

And when the opportunity comes, be willing to ask a question, receive counsel, and follow it through. A teachable spirit isn't formed by observation alone—it's formed when a man lets another man help set the plumb line for his life.

Consider this: "Who has God placed in my church or life that I admire from a distance but haven't intentionally learned from up close?"

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**Traits describe the man God desires—
Paths develop the man God uses.**

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