



QUALITIES OF A **CONTRIBUTOR**

Qualities of a Contributor (Core Resources)

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Welcome to the Contribute Step of ABCD Discipleship

At this step, we encourage you to contribute to God's work by serving in a church ministry or in your Life Group.

This lesson aims to teach you about the character and competence of a disciple who contributes to God's work.

As you partner with God to build His church, may you be continually transformed into the image of Christ.

SESSION 1

Character of a Contributor

God is interested in you growing to become more like Jesus in your character. Just like David in the Bible, it was not about him contributing as a young shepherd boy or contributing as a King in Israel. Rather, it was the heart he had for God that made him stand out before God. David's heart for God helped him grow in his character and take the correct steps towards God even after he made mistakes in his life. As you contribute in God's work, God wants to continue working on your character.

One good assessment of our character is using the acronym **FAST**. We need to be **Faithful, Available, Submissive** and **Teachable**. A contributor with FAST characteristics will be used greatly by God and will last through years, still loving and serving God.

Faithful

None of us are owners of God's work. We are merely stewards of the responsibilities that God has entrusted with.

1 Corinthians 4:2

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

As faithful contributors, we are to be committed to the responsibilities that we are entrusted with. We should not give up at the sign of trouble or discouragement, but we should stick with our responsibility and see it through to the end.

Being faithful with what we have

God has entrusted each of us with a different set of spiritual gifts, talents, passions, life experiences and financial resources. Some may have been entrusted with more, but all of us have something that we can be faithful with. We need not compare with others how much or little we have, but we can seek to be faithful with what God has entrusted us with.

Read: Matthew 25:14-30

In the parable of the bags of gold that Jesus told, what was important to the master was that each servant was faithful with the number of bags of gold they were entrusted with. Those servants received their master's affirmation for being faithful:

Matthew 25:23

"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!"

On the other hand, the servant that despised how little he was entrusted with and did not do anything about his bag of gold, received the harshest rebuke from his master.

Through this parable, we can learn that it is not so important what our starting point is. God has entrusted each of us with a different set of resources. Each of us should seek to be faithful with what God has entrusted us with, and as we do so, God will add more resources unto us.

Being faithful includes being fruitful

Some people may have the idea that faithfulness is about repeating the same process over again, regardless of effectiveness. While this may be true in certain seasons, we can also see from the parable that faithfulness has a clear element of fruitfulness.

Being faithful means that we are fully committed to our responsibility, seeking to achieve God's purpose in the best way possible. We should not blindly repeat what we have been doing all along, but we should continually evaluate how we can be more fruitful in our contribution to God's work.

Reflection Station: Do you find it easy or difficult to recognise that God has entrusted you with gifts and talents? How can you be faithful with what God has entrusted you with?

Available

When we make what we have available to God, even if we do not have much, God can multiply. Conversely, even if we have plenty, if we are unwilling to make it available for God's work, we will not be able to contribute much.

Isaiah 6:8

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"
And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"*

When God called, Isaiah was ready to respond. He was willing to put down his own responsibilities so that he could offer himself fully to do whatever God wanted him to do.

Making our time available

We all have responsibilities at work, in school or at home. Being available does not mean we sit around not doing anything, waiting for God to call us. Instead, making our time available means that we are willing to re-prioritise our responsibilities so that we can serve God, even at short notice.

If we find that our schedules tend to fill up quickly, we need to be intentional to free up time in our schedules to serve God. We need to give God the best of our time and our energy, not just whatever we have left over.

Making our time available to God is not just about tasks or ministry responsibilities. Many times, God calls us to be available to one another, to meet the needs of brothers and sisters that God has placed in our community. In doing so, we must be willing to be inconvenienced, have less time for our hobbies and have our schedules disrupted. Our primary motivation is to be available to the people that God loves.

Making our finances available

Apart from being available with our time and energy, we can make our financial resources available for God. After all, we are merely stewards of what God has entrusted to us.

1 Chronicles 29:3-5

³ *Besides, in my devotion to the temple of my God I now give my personal treasures of gold and silver for the*

temple of my God, over and above everything I have provided for this holy temple: ⁴ three thousand talents of gold (gold of Ophir) and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for the overlaying of the walls of the buildings, ⁵ for the gold work and the silver work, and for all the work to be done by the craftsmen.

On top of his time and energy, King David chose to set aside his personal treasure because he prioritised what mattered to God – the building of His temple.

Matthew 6:19-21

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Commitment Station: Whether you have much or little, be willing to make it available for God's purposes.

Submissive

Being submissive is being willing to follow despite not fully understanding or agreeing. Submissiveness is an attitude that God esteems. The Bible talks about the attitude of submission in our relationship with God.

Submit to God

We are to submit ourselves to God even when we may not fully understand God's ways from the onset, but we trust in God's character and His plans for our lives.

Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
⁶ in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

God has the best plan for us. By submitting to God instead of following our own plans, thoughts and emotions, we demonstrate our trust in God above ourselves.

Submit to God's appointed leaders

Many of us may not have difficulty with submitting to God, but some of us can be uncomfortable with the idea of submitting to leaders. This discomfort could stem from our prior bad experiences with authority. We may have witnessed first-hand how parents, teachers, bosses or other leaders abused their authority and took advantage of those they were leading. But abuse of authority does not mean that authority in itself is wrong. Authority, when used for good, can be extremely beneficial.

Romans 13:1-2

¹ Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. ² Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

The Bible is clear that all authority is established by God for His purposes. That does not mean that the people in authority are perfect or will use their authority without flaws, but we must recognise that the idea of authority is God's idea. Submission is a godly attitude. We choose to submit because we obey and trust in God's principles.

As contributors, we should seek to submit even though we may not understand or agree fully yet. This does not mean that we blindly agree with everything. There are times when we may disagree and debate long and hard about matters. But when decisions are made, we all need to pull together in the same direction, because God values the unity of the body. If we are only willing to submit when we fully understand or agree, that is not submission at all.

Hebrews 13:17

Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.

Reflection station: How can you learn to submit to God and your leaders even when you do not agree with or understand yet?

Teachable

At first glance, being submissive and teachable seem like the same thing. Both give the impression of listening to authority over us. The key difference is that being teachable means we are actively learning from God and our leaders, and we are growing in our maturity. Being submissive alone could mean that while we submit even though we do not agree or understand, we may not learn anything or change our opinion in any way. To be teachable is to be eager to learn as much as we can, so that we can grow and mature in God's ways.

Being teachable requires us to maintain a humble spirit and be willing to learn from God and our leaders. Here are some ways we can be teachable:

Be teachable towards God's truth

Be it through weekend sermons, ministry meetings or mentoring sessions, we often receive God's truth through teachings. Whether we have heard lessons for the first or hundredth time, we must always keep learning from God's truth and be active to apply it in our lives.

We can also be taught through correction. Most of us do not like our mistakes pointed out to us. It is far easier to receive praise for a good job we have done well. But none of us are perfect. Most of the time, correction given to us is true and is meant for our good. It is important for us to prioritise the truth we receive that can help us grow.

Proverbs 15:32

*Those who disregard discipline despise themselves,
but the one who heeds correction gains understanding.*

As we train ourselves to receive correction, it will become less painful. In time to come, we learn to appreciate leaders that correct us, because we begin to trust their heart in wanting us to grow.

Be teachable towards our leaders' life example

Being teachable towards our leaders and their life examples require us to be proactive. We are learning to think like them and how they make decisions. This includes aspects of church ministry and relationship with God, and also other aspects in daily living like family, relationships, career/studies, finances and even diet or exercise. By being proactive to ask questions, we can glean biblical principles for decision-making beyond the setting of formal teachings.

Hebrews 13:7

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

Pride is often the main obstacle that often prevents us from maturing in God. Pride causes us to think that we know better than our leaders and that we do not need their feedback. Before long, we are stuck in our ways and stop growing. It is a blessing to have other mature Christians to help us grow in our journey with God. It is our responsibility to keep this channel open so that we can mature continually.

Commitment Station: Commit to being teachable towards God and your leaders.

Your character determines your contribution

God is more interested in who you can be than what you can do. As you contribute to God's work, may you always prioritise your being more than your doing.

SESSION 2

Competence of a Contributor

While character is most important to God, competence is also crucial in our contribution. Besides giving God our time, we contribute to God's work with our hands.

Psalm 78:72

And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skilful hands he led them.

David did not just have a good heart, he also had skilful hands. Having skilful hands does not mean that we must be especially gifted. Rather, it means that no matter where we are at our abilities, we are willing to learn and improve to become more competent.

Contributing with Excellence

We serve the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Everything that God created was of excellent standard. God deserves our best because He gave us His best. This means that whether we are contributing in our Life Groups or in a church ministry, we give nothing short of our best, because God deserves it.

When we are given a responsibility, we need to take our role seriously and execute our duties to the best of our abilities. This includes:

- understanding the end goal of the role and the bigger picture
- knowing what is required of the role
- working hard to make sure we discharge our responsibility well

For example, if we are given the responsibility to lead games for our Life Group this week, we should:

- understand the end goal of the role and the bigger picture

We can ask our Life Group Leader what are the objectives of the games for this week. Usually, they are to liven up the atmosphere of the group, and perhaps help to get to know new people better.

We should understand how the games section ties in with the overall Life Group programme. We may discover that the games play an important part in opening up people's hearts to one another and help them be more at ease to receive from God.

- know what is required of the role

We can ask our Life Group Leader how much time we have to plan for the games. If we are given a time limit, it is important to keep to that time limit so that we honour the other segments of the programme.

We can ask our if we have any boundaries to plan within. For example, we can ask if our Life Group Leader is alright if we make people run around the room, or would prefer to keep it milder.

- work hard to make sure we discharge our responsibility well

This could include thinking through our audience's preferences, learning from those who are good with games and searching for ideas of creative games on the internet.

Colossians 3:23-24

²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Contributing with our Spiritual Gifts and Abilities

One area that largely affects our competence are our spiritual gifts and God-given abilities. All of us are gifted in a different way. When we contribute in our giftedness, the effect on God's work is exponential.

1 Peter 4:10

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Discover our gifts and abilities

We may not know what our gifts and abilities yet, and that is alright. We can begin by seeking to discover our gifts and abilities.

The best way to do this is by starting to contribute somewhere. Through contributing in a variety of different roles, we get to discover what we are gifted in, and also areas that we are less gifted in.

It is also through contributing that God adds to us more and different gifts. As we are faithful with little, God will add on more.

Reflection Station: Do you know what spiritual gifts and abilities God has given to you?

Develop our gifts and abilities

When we have a better idea of how God has gifted us, we should hone these gifts. We can seek out fellow contributors who are more gifted or experienced than us and learn from them. We can also read books, articles and watch videos to develop these gifts.

Developing of gifts requires diligence. For every moment of contribution, we must be willing to put in hours of hard work behind the scenes developing this gift. While this is not apparent to most people, it pleases God when we take His work seriously and work at it with all our heart.

Deploy our gifts and abilities

The church is one body with many parts.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

The goal of contributing is to honour God with excellence and play our part in His work. Contributing with our gifts should never be a platform for us to show off and draw attention for ourselves. When we recognise our part in the overall picture of God's work and play our part with competence, the body of Christ is blessed and we receive that blessing together with the rest of the body.

Commitment Station: Make a commitment to God to discover, develop and deploy your gifts to build the church.

Your competence multiplies your contribution

No two parts of the body of Christ are designed in the same way. All of us have a different combination of gifts and abilities. When we put our gifts to work in the way that God has designed, we serve the body of Christ in a way that no one else can.

SESSION 3

Armour-Bearing Our Leaders

Contributing to God's work is not one man's effort alone. God has put us together in teams and has placed leaders over every team. If we are contributing in our Life Group, our team leader is our Life Group Leader. If we are contributing in a church ministry, we have ministry Team Leaders.

For every highly functioning team, members of the team trust and support their leader. As a contributor in God's church, you not only contribute with the work of your hands, but you are also helping your leader be more effective in leading their team to contribute to God.

What are armour-bearers?

An armour-bearer was entrusted with the responsibility of carrying a large shield and other weapons for a king, commander-in-chief or captain. An armour-bearer was to kill enemies wounded by their masters. After enemy soldiers were wounded with javelins or arrows, armour-bearers finished the job with clubs or swords.

King David had a group of men who were excellent armour-bearers to him. They performed their responsibilities so well that they were known throughout the land as David's Mighty Men.

2 Samuel 23:8-23

⁸ These are the names of David's mighty warriors:

Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the Three; he raised his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter.

⁹ Next to him was Eleazar son of Dodai the Ahohite. As one of the three mighty warriors, he was with David when they taunted the Philistines gathered at Pas Dammim for battle. Then the Israelites retreated,¹⁰ but Eleazar stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day. The troops returned to Eleazar, but only to strip the dead.

¹¹ Next to him was Shammah son of Agee the Hararite. When the Philistines banded together at a place where there was a field full of lentils, Israel's troops fled from them. ¹² But Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field. He defended it and struck the Philistines down, and the LORD brought about a great victory.

¹³ During harvest time, three of the thirty chief warriors came down to David at the cave of Adullam, while a band of Philistines was encamped in the Valley of Rephaim. ¹⁴ At that time David was in the stronghold, and the Philistine garrison was at Bethlehem. ¹⁵ David longed for water and said, "Oh, that someone would get me a drink of water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem!" ¹⁶ So the three mighty warriors broke through the Philistine lines, drew water from the well near the gate of Bethlehem and carried it back to David. But he refused to drink it; instead, he poured it out before the LORD. ¹⁷ "Far be it from me, LORD, to do this!" he said. "Is it not the blood of men who went at the risk of their lives?" And David would not drink it.

Such were the exploits of the three mighty warriors.

¹⁸ Abishai the brother of Joab son of Zeruiah was chief of the Three. He raised his spear against three hundred men, whom he killed, and so he became as famous as the Three. ¹⁹ Was he not held in greater honor than the Three? He became their commander, even though he was not included among them. ²⁰ Benaiah son of Jehoiada, a valiant fighter from Kabzeel, performed great exploits. He struck down Moab's two mightiest warriors. He also went down into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. ²¹ And he struck down a huge Egyptian. Although the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, Benaiah went against him with a club. He snatched the spear from the Egyptian's hand and killed him with his own spear. ²² Such were the exploits of Benaiah son of Jehoiada; he too was as famous as the three mighty warriors. ²³ He was held in greater honor than any of the Thirty, but he was not included among the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard.

While the vocation of armour-bearers no longer exists in our world today, the attitudes are timeless and can be applied in our context.

Attitudes of Armour-Bearers

1. They are committed to the cause

David's Mighty Men were totally committed to their nation Israel and their leader David. Even when they were homeless and hungry, they continued to fight for Israel with their lives.

2. They are courageous in the face of danger

Even when David's Mighty Men were outnumbered, they defended their positions courageously and won many battles against the odds.

3. They depend on God completely

David's Mighty Men recognised that it was God who brought about their victory. As a result, they could go all out for Him, knowing that the battles belonged to the Lord.

4. They support their leaders fully

David's Mighty Men were willing to risk their lives for the welfare of their leader. Their love for their leader was exemplified in their actions.

Reflection Station: How can you be a better armour-bearer to your leader?

Core Teams and DMM

In Hope Church, we sometimes call our key contributors Core Team and/or DMM, an acronym for David's Mighty Men. We want to embody the attitudes of David's Mighty Men in being good armour-bearers to our leaders.

Commitment Station: Commit to armour-bearing your leader fully.

Armour-Bear your leader

God puts us in teams so that we can be more effective in our contribution to His work. When we personalise the success of our team and team leader, God will help us succeed.