

### ***What is a discipleship group?***

A discipleship group is gender-specific group of *usually 3 to 4 believers* who meet together weekly or as often as they can for the purpose of growing in spiritual maturity.

### ***How do I find a discipleship group?***

Life Groups are the most natural “fishing ponds” for discipleship groups. As people form friendships and bonds in Life Groups, handfuls of them will decide to take the next step and begin a discipleship journey together in a discipleship group. That said, don’t limit yourself to your Life Group. If other relationships present an opportunity to form a discipleship group, then by all means, pursue those relationships.

If you would like to be in a discipleship group, join a Life Group. If you are currently in a Life Group and desire to be in a discipleship group, talk to your Life Group leader or a church leader.

### ***How do I lead a discipleship group?***

The only absolute requirement for leading a discipleship group is that you be intentionally pursuing Christ. You do not need to be a master teacher or have all of the answers; you do not need to be able to say. If you can say, “Follow me; I’m pursuing Christ,” you have the tools you need to lead a discipleship group.

As a discipleship group leader, you set the tone for the group’s atmosphere. You are not lecturing students; you are cultivating an intimate, accountable relationship with a few close friends.

### ***How do I choose disciples?***

The first step in establishing a formal disciple-making relationship is choosing disciples. Jesus, our example in selecting disciples, spent time in prayer before selecting men (Luke 6:12-16). The word disciple means learner. Begin by asking God to send you a group of men or women who have a desire to learn and grow.

When people approached Jesus about becoming His disciples, our Lord held a high standard. One man said, “I’ll follow you, but let me go bury my father.” Now, the man’s father had not yet died—the man was reaching for an excuse to postpone the kind of commitment that Jesus expected of him. Jesus responded with something that the man would have understood to mean, “You can’t do that. The kingdom is too important.”

Your discipleship group should consist of believers, who are **Faithful, Available, and Teachable**. A faithful person is dedicated, trustworthy, and committed. Consider a potential disciple's faithfulness by observing other areas of his/her spiritual life, such as church attendance, Life Group involvement, or service in the church. Faithfulness is determined by a commitment to spiritual things.

Remember, not everybody who does these things is teachable. A teachable person has a desire to learn and apply what is taught. One who is teachable is open to correction. Recognize teachability by observing one's response to God's Word. For example, after hearing a sermon on prayer, do they begin to pray more regularly? Or after a lesson about the dangers of the tongue, does the person implement changes in their speech? A teachable person not only listens to what is taught, but also applies it to his or her life.

After discerning that an individual is faithful, available, and teachable, prayerfully approach him or her and ask, *"Would you be interested in studying the Bible, memorizing Scripture, and praying together?"* Many people are open to that. All you have to do is ask. Keep in mind that men should disciple men, and women should disciple women.

### ***How many people should be in the group?***

Because accountability works well in a smaller setting, the ideal size of a disciple-making group is 3 to 4.

### ***Where should we meet?***

Meeting at church, restaurants, coffee shops, bookstores, diners, and homes are all good options. Meeting outside the church, though, in the community encourages your group members to share their faith, teaching them it is okay to read the Bible at a restaurant or pray in public. Be sure to select a place that is convenient to all group members.

### ***How often should we meet?***

Ideally, you should meet once a week for about an hour to an hour and a half. This schedule does not prohibit those you are discipling from calling you throughout the week or coming by for counsel when needed.

### ***Is there an attendance requirement?***

Yes. The first time you meet with a potential group, explain the disciple-making covenant with them. Since we're going to spend our lives together for the next twelve to eighteen months, you want to know if they are committed. Some people have said after the initial meeting, *"Uh, this isn't really for me. I'm not interested."* That's okay.

Allow potential disciples to opt out of the group on the front end after understanding the expectations spelled out in the disciple-making covenant. Remember, you are looking for people who want to be disciplined, people who have a desire to grow and learn. An unwillingness to commit reveals that they are not ready to be in a discipleship group.

### ***What do discipleship group meetings look like?***

Here are some elements that your weekly meetings can include:

- Open with prayer.
- Have a time of intentional conversation by briefly sharing the highs and lows of the week. You can also share celebrations and praises.
- Quote your Scripture memory verses for the week.
- Study the Word of God together. A great way to do this is to share H.E.A.R. journals from the week. The goal of studying the Bible is to apply the Word of God.
- Spend a few moments asking questions and keeping each other accountable. All accountability should be saturated with grace, not legalism. Address such areas as: *How have your relationships been this week? How has your time in the Word been? Have you struggled morally? Have you shared the gospel or biblical truths to others?*
- Share prayer requests and close with prayer.

### ***How do I challenge my discipleship group to memorize Scripture?***

Proverbs 25:11 says, *“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.”*

How many times has a Scripture come to mind when you needed just the right words in a situation? Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would bring to remembrance all that He said (John 14:26). Those passages of Scripture we have memorized will be brought to our memory at the right moment – but we must learn them. Group members will memorize Scripture if you hold them accountable through reciting verses to one another at every meeting.

### ***Should I disciple unbelievers?***

The preferred method is a gathering of born-again believers seeking to grow in their faith. How can you determine if someone is saved or not? We recommend beginning every group by asking each person to share their testimony with the others. Next, ask them to explain the gospel. A great resource for anyone struggling with belief in Christ is Greg Gilbert’s book, *What is the Gospel?*

### ***When should I ask someone to leave the discipleship group?***

These are some reasons for asking someone to leave the group: they don't possess a teachable spirit, they are not faithful in attending meetings, they are not completing assigned work and putting in the kind of effort you require, they are living a lifestyle of blatant and unrepentant sin, etc.

Like Jesus' relationship with His disciples, ours is a serious relationship, as well: a relationship built upon a mutual commitment to Christ and each other. Tragically, some will not follow through with that commitment, forcing you to confront them about their unfaithfulness.

### ***What if I don't know the answer to a question?***

There is no shame in not knowing all of the answers to every question. Simply confess that you may not have all the answers, but you will find them. Then do so before the next meeting. Ask your pastor or another spiritual leader to help you with the answer. Never give the impression that you have all the answers.

### ***When do I send out disciples to make disciples?***

Always begin with the end in mind. Your group should meet for 12 to 18 months. Some groups develop a closer bond, which results in accelerated growth; others take longer. We do not recommend meeting for longer than 18 months. Some group members will desire to leave the group and begin their own groups. Others, however, will want to remain in the comfort zone of the existing group. Some will not want to start another discipleship group because of the sweet fellowship and bonds formed within the current group. Remember, the goal is for the men and the women of the group to replicate their lives into someone else.