

## **What is the vision and goal of discipleship groups?**

*Vision* - Together, that every member would grow in their knowledge of God so as to walk in a manner worthy of Him.

*Goal* - Together, through men's and women's discipleship groups, we seek to create and foster a culture of:

1. Knowing, following, and enjoying God together.
2. Increasing biblical literacy and raising bible teachers.
3. Advancing the gospel through evangelism, discipleship, and holiness.
4. Discipling by deliberately doing spiritual good to one another.
5. Seeing God's glory made known to the heavens.

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

Discipleship Groups are gender-specific groups of 3-5 Christians that meet regularly for 16 weeks each semester to study Scripture and grow in spiritual maturity.

## **How do Discipleship Groups relate to the culture of discipling at Fairview?**

*One-on-One* - This is the primary and deeply ordinary way we seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ. There is no program for one-on-one discipling. Rather, we simply are seeking to cultivate a culture where discipling one another toward maturity in Christ is the norm. Thus, discipleship groups are the formal way of discipling, while one-on-one is the informal way.

*One Another* - The Scriptures are clear about loving one another. If we take responsibility to love one another, then we'll actively seek to be discipled and disciple others. In this way, the saints do the work of ministry (Eph. 4:13-14) and the whole church "builds itself up" in love (Eph. 4:15-16).

*Meaningful* - 1) Intentional - imitate Christ as we intentionally and deliberately do spiritual good toward others. 2) Purposeful - Purposely seek to bear fruit that glorifies God. 3) Joyful - to those bought by Christ, there is hopeful joy in the messy, hard, and trialsome times in the church. 4) Normal - This is the normal activity of the church.

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

First, pray for 2-4 people that you can invest in over the next year. Second, 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. There are other relationships present in the congregation which present an opportunity to form a discipleship group.

If you are currently in a Life Group and desire to be in a discipleship group, make yourself known to some of the members in the group, or talk to your Life Group leader, men/women ministry leader, or Pastor Joseph.

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

As a discipleship group leader, you set the tone for not only the group's atmosphere, but how those group members will disciple others. Discipleship Group leaders are not lecturing students; you are cultivating an intimate, accountable relationship with a few close friends through teaching God's word and asking particular questions. Therefore, discipleship group leaders are prepared beforehand to teach and facilitate the group to know, follow, and enjoy God together.

### **How do I choose participants?**

Jesus 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 and living in the light with other Christians. 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 and disposition? 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 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 studying and applying Scripture works well in a smaller setting, the ideal size of a discipleship group is 3 to 5.

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

Meeting at the church building, 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. Additionally, meeting in homes encourages group members to practice hospitality. Be sure to select a place that is convenient to all group members.

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

Each semester, you should meet regularly. This may happen once or twice a week for about an hour to two hours. Of course, 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 discipleship group commitment with them. Since we're going to spend our lives together for the next twelve 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 participants to opt out of the group on the front end after understanding the expectations spelled out in the discipleship group commitments. Remember, you are looking for people who want to be discipled, 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:

- Have a brief time of intentional conversation sharing the highs and lows of the week. You can also share celebrations and praises.
- Pray and read the Scripture passage for the week.
- Study the Word together. A great way to do this is through the C.O.M.A. method (context, observation, meaning, and application). The goal of studying the Bible is knowing, applying, and enjoying God through his Word.
- 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 pray.

### **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 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 of Discipleship Groups is a gathering of church members seeking to grow in their faith. A great resource for anyone struggling with belief or evangelizing someone 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 acknowledge that you may not have all the answers, but Christ will help 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 months. Some groups develop a closer bond, which results in accelerated growth; others take longer. We do not recommend meeting for longer than 12 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.