



SESSION ONE: UNDERSTANDING DISCIPLESHIP

SESSION TOPICS

- What it means to be a disciple
- The process of making disciples
- The motivation behind discipleship
- Goals of disciple-making
- How to make disciples

IT STARTS WITH YOU

Before we discuss how to mentor or disciple someone, let's first agree on a biblical definition of what a disciple is. For obvious reasons, you must first be a disciple of Christ before you can reproduce disciples. After all, you can't teach what you don't know, and you can't lead where you don't go.

Definition

A disciple is a learner who follows another's teaching and seeks to imitate another's life. *The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.* (LUKE 6:40) To be Christ's disciple, then, is to strive to be like Him.

Marks of a disciple

- A diligent student of the teachings of Christ, applying them to their life - **JOHN 8:31**
- Loves others - **JOHN 13:34-35**
- Bears much fruit - **JOHN 15:8**
- Places nothing above their relationship with Christ - **LUKE 14:33**
- Engaged in the mission of Christ - **1 JOHN 3:16-18**

Discipleship is a process, not a program

Discipleship is, at its core, a very personal journey. Because every person has a different faith background and any number of different struggles and temptations, discipleship cannot be easily packaged into a program that lasts only for a period of time. Instead, it is a process of intentionally helping other Christians grow in the knowledge and application of God's truth.

Depending on where the person is spiritually, what they need from you will vary.

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	WHAT THEY NEED
New Believer	Unsure. Vulnerable. Can easily get themselves into trouble without someone looking out for them	Help understanding scripture; how to pray; encouragement; a safe environment for growth
Growing	Disciplined but impressionable. Taking in God's word in for themselves; developing spiritual disciplines; curious and inquisitive	Solid teaching; new identity; how to discern God's will; how to identify false teaching; how to resist temptation
Mature	Serving. Leading. Disciplined; engaged; serving; teaching; community is important	Encouragement to keep growing; leadership examples/ opportunities; evangelism training
Reproducing	Developing disciples/ disciple-makers. See others' spiritual needs and come alongside them to help	Someone to disciple and someone to encourage and help them as they disciple others

Now don't get nervous about having to figure everything out on your own. In Session 2, we will talk about how to determine where to begin when discipling someone, and later we'll introduce some tools to help guide your conversations.

Remember, the goal of discipleship is to help others exhibit the marks of a disciple we discussed earlier in this session. To help someone know and follow Jesus is not only eternally significant, it is tremendously rewarding.

'Go and make disciples' was not a suggestion



The **common reasons** people don't come alongside others to help them grow in Christ are:

- I don't have time
- They will ask questions I can't answer
- I'm not as far along in my spiritual walk as I think I should be

When Jesus gave the Great Commission, He wasn't talking to revered, retired pastors with seminary degrees. He was talking to men with different backgrounds, levels of education and standing in the community. The only qualification you need is a personal walk with Christ yourself and a desire to help others know Him as well. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, *"Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ."* He wasn't standing on the summit as he pointed others to Christ. He was on the trail himself, bringing others along behind him.

If you wait for life to calm down or your battle with temptation to finally be won, you'll never start. Consider this: one of the ways God transforms and matures our faith is through our obedience to what He's asked of us.

How to make disciples

First, let's be clear: *you can do nothing apart from Christ.*

As already discussed, disciple-making is a spiritual relationship. Because it is a relational process, there is no script or timeline. It should challenge the other person beyond their current knowledge and comfort zone, but it must also be sensitive to what's happening in their lives throughout the journey.

A disciple-maker is one who listens well and seeks to understand the person. They believe in the person and encourage them in all seasons of life – in victory as well as failure and sin. It is this relational investment in the lives of others – helping them understand and apply the word of God, extending grace to them, working through the hard stuff – that helps them experience the abundant life Christ promises us.

The goal of discipleship

The goal of discipleship is helping each other become more like Christ. It is a putting to death of our sinful nature in the process of conforming to the image of Jesus (see Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:5; and Romans 8:29). Disciples are growing, loving, self-denying, and soul-winning.

Discipleship is not a private matter between the individual and God.

One-on-one or small group?

There are pros and cons to both one-on-one and small group discipleship. One-on-one typically provides the most flexibility when the person you're discipling is working through a struggle or needs to spend more time on a certain topic. Small groups, however, can provide a group accountability and momentum that is hard to match with one-on-one. So the answer is really this: whatever feels most comfortable for you and the person(s) you're meeting with.

If you choose to disciple more than one person in a group setting, consider these 2 best-practices:

- **Keep it small, as in no more than 2-3 people at a time. The more you have in the group, the easier it will be for certain members to 'hide' in the group and the harder it will be to have consistent attendance from every member**
- **Be willing to work one-on-one with a member who is not able to keep up with the pace of the group or may be working through some life struggle.**

The principle of reproduction

Paul told his protégé Timothy, *"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others."* (2 TIMOTHY 2:2) Discipleship should develop others in such a way that they are then equipped to do the same with others. For this reason, we recommend using a discipleship study like CBMC's Operation Timothy to give them first-hand experience with a proven resource they can one day use with others.

It is important that you cast this vision for reproduction from the very beginning. Re-cast this vision every time you meet and pray together for the people they will one day disciple. This missional purpose can fade into the background if it's not communicated clearly and frequently. Your person may initially dismiss the idea of discipling someone else because they don't feel ready or qualified, but remind them that it's the Spirit who does the work and He has commissioned each of us to join Him!

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

—2 TIMOTHY 2:22

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What thoughts or feelings do you have about discipling someone else?

2. How has your understanding of Matthew 28:19-20 developed as you have matured in your faith?

HOMEWORK

1. Memorize: Matthew 28:19-20
2. Ask God for someone to disciple