

Discipleship Groups: Resources, Tips and FAQs

January 2019

Resources

For group study

The Bible: Maybe start with an epistle (consider Colossians, Ephesians or Philipppians). From there decide as a group what book of the Bible you will read together next.

The Daily Bible Reading (various volumes put out by Matthias Media) – these books have the full text (short enough for a Discipleship Group), a couple questions at the end of the text and some prayer ideas. It's a simple guide to use for any Discipleship Group. You can purchase some of the volumes in our resource center or find all of them at

<http://www.matthiasmedia.com/growth/personal-bible-reading>

There are a lot of books that might serve to facilitate a Discipleship Group. The goal however is to keep the groups focused on a chapter or text of the Bible.

On discipleship

Gospel-Centred Discipleship by Jonathan Dodson

The Fight by John White

The Walk by Stephen Smallman

Grow: Reproducing Through Organic Discipleship by Winfield Bevins (free download)

Tips

These are only intended to be guidelines that can be adapted to suit the particular needs of your Discipleship Group.

1. Talk (approx. 15 mins)

- Spend some time catching up on life.
- If we don't do this, we fight in the dark, isolated from what God is doing in the larger picture
- of our lives.
- Get to know each other's histories and backgrounds (we suggest devoting the whole of your first meeting to this). Pray and ask the Spirit to lead you to Christ in your discussion.

2. Text-Theology-Life (approx. 30-45 mins)

a. Text

- Each person in the Discipleship Group commits to come together and read the same chapter from the Bible or one of the resources above before or during the meeting depending on how you desire to work through it.
- As you read, make a point of asking the Holy Spirit to draw your attention to whatever He wants you to know. The Spirit may be prompting you and/or a member of your Discipleship Group to repent of a sin, rejoice in a promise, meditate on an insight. Consider making a note so you can share your personal reflections and promptings for those in your group when you get together.
- When you meet together try to make the Bible passages you've read your initial focus.
- Remember that it is the Word of God that pierces our hearts and helps us to see sin and rejoice in Jesus more clearly (Hebrews 4:12).

b. Theology

- Work through the text/chapter in your Discipleship Group, trying to follow the flow of the original author's argument.

- Ask the Spirit for wisdom and understanding.
- Try to understand the central theological message of the chapter.
- Strive to be Christ-centered, *not* application-centered: the goal isn't merely to look like Jesus but to *know* him.
- Take confidence in the fact that Jesus is sufficient for our failures and strong for our successes.
- Press one another for honest responses to the chapter (particularly in light of the knowledge you have about each other's backgrounds and histories).
- Challenge each other and encourage one another with the promises of God. In order to remain gospel-centered, be sure to glance twice at Jesus for every glance at your sin.
- Consider how Christ's various roles offer you grace in the fight.
- If you are tempted to self-righteousness, remember that Christ is your righteousness.

c. Life

- While discussing the chapter, bring your personal struggles and successes into the conversation. Be sure to allow plenty of time for this.
- Share your lives; promote grace-driven fighting and faithful prayer.
- Be sensitive to one another. Very often, one of you will need more time to share than others.
- Defer to one another in love. Fight the fight of faith with and not against one another.
- Finally, be sure to share the names of people whom you are trying to bless with the gospel.

3. Pray (approx. 15 mins)

- Spend some time praying the gospel into one another's lives.
- Pray promises, hopes, fears, confessions.
- Pray for people in your life who don't know Jesus.

FAQs

I want to be in a Discipleship Group but I'm not sure who to approach – what should I do?

If you find yourself in this situation, please consider approaching someone in your House Group or in a Ministry Team you currently serve in (e.g. Hospitality Team). Alternatively, contact your House Group Leader who will try to help you find a group.

How do House Groups (HGs) and Discipleship Groups work together? HGs are groups of 10-20 people that meet weekly in people's homes. Meetings last around 90 minutes. They include prayer and singing and a study of the Bible helping us to apply the previous Sunday's sermon to our lives. Men and women of every age (13 and up) and background in the church are encouraged to mix and enjoy fellowship together.

Discipleship Groups are more flexible and focused, intimate gatherings of 3-4 people of the same-sex of your choosing. They are intended to provide an environment in which we're at ease sharing and challenging each other about personal and sensitive issues.

Discipleship Groups are about intimacy and affinity; HGs are about interacting with the body of Christ, men and women of every age and background using their gifts to bless and minister to each other and to corporately engage in mission together.

Why no 'leaders'?

Our aim is to encourage every person to take ownership of the call to make disciples by taking responsibility for helping others to become more like Christ.

Why groups of 3s and 4s?

We recommend Discipleship Groups be groups of three or four to help develop closer and more intimate relationships and to facilitate greater flexibility.

How frequent?

Discipleship Groups require us to get comfortable getting into each other's lives and sharing our hearts. We recommend weekly or every other week.

I don't feel equipped to address difficult issues – what should I do?

If issues are raised in your Discipleship Groups that you feel too inexperienced to address, please confidentially refer the matter first to your House Group Leader(s), or where appropriate, to your Pastor.

Can you please sum up why you are encouraging us to be a part of a Discipleship Group?

For mutual encouragement, accountability, shared joy and hope.

Because we see the need for other Christians to point us to the Word, help us see Jesus, celebrate victories and pray with us when we fall.

To purposefully come together, discuss the Word and bow to its authority keeping it Christ-centered, Gospel-driven, Scripture focused (NOT sin-centered).

The goal is to fight *for faith* and against sin, the flesh and the devil and do so believing the promises of God found in Scripture.

Make a text your initial focus, devotionally reading the same chapter from a book of the Bible. Then come together and talk about it.

This is not about morbid introspection. It's not a confessional booth where I confess my sin, you confess yours – we pat each other on the back and then pray. It's not a legalistic way to try and impress God or others.

Jonathan Dodson: *“Jesus frees me from trying to impress God or others because he has impressed God on my behalf...I cling to a perfect Christ.”*

This is all part of what it looks like to set our hearts and minds on Jesus.