

Discipleship Groups: Resources, Tips and FAQs

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Your most important resource

The Bible Use a translation you understand. The NIV or ESV versions are both accurate and accessible. As a group decide what book of the Bible you will read together. The goal is to keep the groups focused on a chapter or text of the Bible.

Additional resources

How to Read the Bible Book by Book by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart – a wonderful guide providing helpful tips and concise summaries of each book of the Bible.

One to One Bible Reading by David Helm

The Walk by Stephen Smallman

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. 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.
- 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. 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.
- 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.

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.
- Defer to one another in love. Fight the fight of faith with and not against one another.

- Finally, be sure to pray for opportunities to share the Gospel. Get specific.

3. Pray (approx. 15 mins)

- Pray promises, hopes, fears, confessions.
- Pray for people in your life who don't know Jesus.

Frequently Asked Questions

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 Serve 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 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 desire 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. Again, make a text your initial focus, devotionally reading the same chapter from a book of the Bible. Then come together, read it out loud and talk about it.

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