

DISCIPLESHIP GROUP **GUIDE**

LOCAL

• CHURCH •

ST. PETE

DISCIPLESHIP GROUP GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

As we walk in the way of Jesus, we grow through mutual encouragement, accountability, shared joy and hope. Simply put, we need others to point us to the Word, help us see Jesus, celebrate victories and pray with us when we fall.

Discipleship Groups consist of 2-4 people (same gender) meeting to read the Bible together, pray with one another and hold each other accountable in their faith. This is all part of what it looks like to set our hearts and minds on Jesus.

STARTING

The place to start is prayer. Express your desire for community to God. Ask Him to lead you by His Spirit and connect you with other believers who would become an integral part of your spiritual development. God hears our prayers and He will guide you into the right discipleship group.

Here are several ways that you can find a discipleship group:

House Group - Typically, a Discipleship Group forms in the context of a House Group. If you have not checked out a HG yet, you can find more information [here](#).

Join an existing group - A discipleship group of 2 or 3 can welcome you to join them. You can often find an existing group at one of the discipleship “big meetings” that happen throughout the year. You can find out when the next Men’s or Women’s Big Meeting is on [our website](#).

Start a new group - Find 1-3 people of your gender who agree to meet together intentionally. This guide is designed to walk you through starting a discipleship group from scratch.

FOCUS

In discipleship groups, we purposefully come together, discuss the Word and bow to its authority. We seek to keep the time Christ-centered, Gospel-driven, and 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, read it out loud and talk about it.

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

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.

You can also find more resources under the “resources” section of our website.

MEETING TOGETHER

These are 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)

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, or 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).

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. The goal is first and foremost to know Jesus.
- 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.

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

What is a disciple?

A disciple is someone who follows Jesus and brings others to Jesus.

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 (same gender) 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 men and women of every age and background, using our gifts to bless and minister to each other and 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.