

DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

Why and How to Disciple Someone

“Go, therefore, and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

[MATTHEW 28:19-20 CSB](#)

“Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”

[DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP](#)

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PART ONE // THE NEED FOR DISCIPLESHIP

*“Go, therefore, and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

MATTHEW 28:19-20 CSB

Jesus left us with this command before ascending back into heaven. The writer, Matthew, decided to organize his gospel account of Jesus in a way that ends the story of Jesus' earthly ministry with this. After all that has happened; all the teaching, all of the miracles, his death and resurrection, he turns the table toward his disciples, *“Now it's your turn.”*

If this is the last thing Jesus said to his disciples, then it isn't something we can casually brush off as unimportant or optional. Yet if we surveyed that average American Christian asking whether they are active in discipleship, I imagine we'd find that many of us aren't living into this invitation. Or we may not even be totally sure what “making disciples” means. How do we know if we are doing it? Is there only one way to do it right?

Right now, can you think of anyone you are intentionally influencing toward the kingdom of heaven? Is there anyone you are intentionally being influenced by in your life to become more like Christ? No matter your answer, you are being discipled and discipling others. The question is just to what? Discipleship is not a Christian term. We can be “discipled” toward all sorts of things: a political view, a new band, pickleball, a secular ideology, or even a sports team (*go Lakers, am i right?*).

Additionally you are being discipled by people or organizations all the time. Especially if you have a phone in your pocket. All day you are being bombarded with ideas, advertisements, ways of thinking, and new products that are trying to influence you. So when we are talking about discipleship, we are talking about discipleship to Jesus. Not to a political party. Not to a brand. Not to a set of ideas. But to a person, the Son of God.

We are called to grow and help others grow more like Jesus. The goal is not just to *come* to faith, but to continue to *grow* in faith. We aren't called to just make converts, but

resilient disciples whose lives reflect Jesus. The Christian life is a lifelong process of being sanctified towards spiritual maturity and it doesn't happen automatically. It takes intentionality, humility, and effort. This is where the importance of intentional discipleship comes in.

NEXT STEPS:

PRAY

Pray a simple prayer that God would give you a heart and urgency for discipleship in your life and that He would help equip and empower you to live it out.

ANSWER

How seriously have you previously taken discipleship in your life? How does looking at Jesus's commission (Matthew 28) change or influence that?

What has prevented you from discipling someone else? Is there anything currently getting in the way?

PART TWO // WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.”

LUKE 6:40 CSB

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

If we are going to define what discipleship is, we have to take a step back and ask what a disciple is. In more modern terminology a disciple is a: learner, follower, apprentice, student, or trainee.

“Disciples in Jesus’s day would follow their rabbi (which means teacher) wherever he went, learning from the rabbi’s teaching and being trained to do as the rabbi did.”

-FRANCIS CHAN // Multiply (p. 16)

A disciple of Jesus is someone who is training to become like him. This doesn’t mean you have to forfeit all modern technology and comfort, but to become like him in character. In the language of Paul, the work continues *“until Christ is formed in you”* (Gal. 4:19 CSB).

WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

So then, what is discipleship? If a disciple is an apprentice or trainee of Jesus, then discipleship is helping another person become like Christ. The goal is not just conversion to belief in Jesus, but continuing to grow more and more like him. When Jesus gives the great commission, he says to make disciples, baptize them and *“teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”* (Matt. 28:20 NIV).

Discipleship is teaching others how to obey what Jesus has modeled and commanded. The heart of discipleship is not *just* head knowledge (although that is a vital part), but helping others live it out in their daily life (i.e. practitioners not just theoreticians). James warns against head knowledge only discipleship when he says, *“But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves”* (James 1:22 CSB).

We are all still in process, none have arrived. So whether you are discipling a 1 minute old believer or a Christian sage in their 90's, none are fully mature in Christ. So discipleship is coming alongside them in their journey to help them abide with Jesus and obey Jesus. Or put another way, discipleship is helping others *be* with Jesus and *become* like Jesus.

SIMPLE DEFINITION OF DISCIPLESHIP: *Helping others become like Jesus.*

NEXT STEPS:

PRAY

Start asking God for Him to bring people to mind who you could help follow and become like Jesus.

ANSWER

In your own words, how would you define discipleship?

What might it look like to help others not only know God's word, but to live it out?

LISTEN

Listen to EP 019 - *What The Heck Is Discipleship | DISCIPLESHIP E1*
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/hillside-community-church/id1601467570?i=1000614295692>

PART THREE // WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS DISCIPLESHIP?

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

ACTS 1:8 CSB

ISN'T THAT THE PASTOR'S JOB?

It can be easy to think that discipleship is the pastor's job, I mean isn't that why we hired him? Didn't we hire a youth pastor to disciple our kids so we don't have to? Or we think our only assignment as Christians is to invite our unbelieving friends to church so they can hear the gospel from the professional. Unfortunately, you aren't off the hook that easily. The New Testament offers a radically different view of discipleship.

*“And he [Christ] gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints **for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,**”*

EPHESIANS 4:11-12 ESV

Making disciples is every Christian's job, not just “professional ministers”. We are all missionaries, no matter where we get a paycheck from. Paul says the ministry leaders are there to equip the saints (believers) for ministry! That means all believers are called to gospel ministry to help build up the church.

Christianity is not a spectator sport. To think that you have to be a pastor to do ministry is like saying the only way to be in the NBA is to be a coach. Don't let a lack of a title, website, or microphone get in the way of you being obedient to Jesus's invitation and call to make disciples.

Additionally, the good news of this model is that you have relationships with people that a pastor maybe never would. You rub shoulders with coworkers, family and neighbors that would possibly never step foot in a church. What would it look like to start viewing those rhythms of your life as your ministry?

“We reduce discipleship to a canned program, and so many in the church end up sidelined in a spectator mentality that delegates disciple making to pastors and professionals, ministers and missionaries. But this is not the way it’s supposed to be.”

FRANCIS CHAN // MULTIPLY

WHO SHOULD I DISCIPLE?

FAMILY FIRST

So we’ve gotten this far. Now it’s time to start thinking about who you can ask to start a discipling relationship. First and foremost, if you are a parent, the first person you should be discipling is your own children. This doesn’t mean you can’t pour into others as well, but if you are neglecting your own family in this area then you probably aren’t ready to be discipling someone outside the home. Of course this can vary depending on how old your kids are, but take seriously the reality that your own family is your first (and built-in) ministry. *(Resources on family discipleship in PART 5)*

YOUNGER IN THE FAITH

Generally speaking, you should try and identify someone who is younger in the faith or similar to you. Paul suggests this model when he advises the older women to teach the younger women (see Titus ch. 2). While older in age doesn’t necessarily mean more mature in the faith, it can be a good starting point especially if you are newer to discipleship.

EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS

Now consider relationships you already have. They could be believers or unbelievers that you want to intentionally share the gospel with. Start with the local church (or community group) and consider if there is anyone you already have an established relationship with that you can influence in their faith. And it doesn’t just have to be 1 on 1. Consider getting a group of 3-4 together regularly.

- Avoid asking someone if you can “disciple them”. This implies a one way relationship as if you won’t be able to learn anything from them. Instead consider asking if they would like to get together, or study the Bible with

you. Ideally it will be a mutually beneficial relationship in growing towards Christ.

NEXT STEPS:

ANSWER

If you're a parent, how are you currently helping your child follow Jesus? If you're not already, what might it look like to start doing so?

Outside of your family, who are a few potential people you could ask to start meeting together with to both grow more like Christ?

PRAY

Pray over the list of people you wrote down above. Ask God to reveal who you should approach, and that He would give you the right opportunity and relationship to live this out.

LISTEN

Listen to *EP 020 - Intentional & Ordinary | DISCIPLESHIP E2*

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/hillside-community-church/id1601467570?i=1000615144751>

PART FOUR // HOW DO I DISCIPLE SOMEONE?

“Discipleship can happen at any time—while applying putty on the side of a house, cleaning up a yard, hanging out at a party, playing board games (the brokenness is pretty obvious for those of us who struggle with being overly competitive), enjoying a vacation together, watching sporting events, or cooking a meal.”

JEFF VANDERSTELT // SATURATE (P. 97).

LIFE ON LIFE: *Life Is This Program*

If you look at the life and ministry of Jesus and ask how *he* disciplined people, the answer you would find is “along the way”. He certainly taught in the synagogue and gave sermons, but he also spent significant time around a table dining with others. Jesus spent countless hours ministering in the ordinary things of life, inviting others into what he was doing and having intentional conversation in those times.

Similarly, Paul said to the Thessalonians, *“We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.”* (1 Thessalonians 2:8 CSB). So don’t let the idea of “discipleship” become one dimensional as how it has to look. You can engage in discipleship in a very organic and ordinary way, the key is just intentionality.

Deuteronomy 6 gives us a template of organic discipleship with our own families:

“These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

A helpful way to think about this is: *What are you already doing that you could invite somebody else into?* Most Americans eat 21 meals a week, could you dedicate 1 of those to meeting and eating with another person? And then as your relationship grows you can engage in meaningful intentional conversation or studying Scripture together (more on that below).

A few rhythms of life that don't have to be *additional things* but can become *intentional* things for discipleship are: **Eating** (sharing a meal), **Playing/Recreating** (What do you do for fun? What would it look like to invite someone into this?) **Running Errands/Chores** (Ask someone to join you!) **Exercise**, etc. Get creative!

MODELING

"Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ."

1 CORINTHIANS 11:1 CSB

"Remember your leaders who have spoken God's word to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith."

HEBREWS 13:7 CSB

Another element of discipleship is modeling. So much of what we learn isn't just through words but through actions. Jesus was the master of this, not just teaching through information but also teaching through example. After washing his disciples' feet, he invites them to do the same. Jim Wilders in *The Other Half of Church* notes, "We need good teaching, but we also need images. We need to see what it looks like to live in God's kingdom, and Jesus gave us both. We make a grace mistake when we think that teaching alone is sufficient. Our character is formed by imitating those to whom we are attached."

Consider an example: It is extremely important and helpful to be taught what a godly and biblical marriage is. But it's equally important and helpful to see one practically lived out. How does the rubber actually meet the road? This is where modeling the Christian life is so important. **Ideally a discipleship relationship would have elements of both teaching and modeling.**

What would it look like to invite a younger believer into your life or home? How could you model a healthy (yet imperfect) gospel-centered marriage? How could you model a

life walking closely with God? How could you model how to glorify God in meaningful work?

LETS GET PRACTICAL

Okay but what do we actually do? What do we talk about? What do we study? What is our aim when we get together with someone? While there is no “right” way to do it, or a one-size-fits-all formula, let’s look at some practical examples of where to start.

BIBLE STUDY

1. Pick a book of the Bible to go through together with 1-3 other people. Depending on your (and their) familiarity with the Bible, we recommend one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) or one of the New Testament Letters (Ephesians, Galatians, Colossians, etc.).
2. Read the first chapter (or section) at or prior to your meeting.
3. Use these 3 guidelines as you study.
 - a. OBSERVATION: *What does the text say?*
 - b. INTERPRETATION: *What does the text mean? (Look at the book’s surrounding context, consider cultural context, and how this fits into the overarching narrative of the whole Bible).*
 - c. APPLICATION: *What would it look like to live this out in your daily lives? Is there a principle you can apply?*
4. Close in prayer together.

BOOK STUDY

1. Pick a Christian or theological book to study together. Be careful not to pick a glorified self-help book, but one that expounds on a particular part or theme of Scripture, teaches theology, or helps you live out the Christian life.
2. Read a chapter a week (before the meeting). Encourage the others to underline anything significant or write any questions unanswered.
3. You (the leader) prepare 3-4 questions beforehand on the chapter to discuss when you meet.
4. Walk through the chapter page by page discussing anything underlined. Or begin by going through your prepared question.
5. Close in prayer together.

INTENTIONAL CONVERSATION

While spending time together in the ordinary times of life (at dinner, grocery store, bike ride, etc.), how can you have intentional conversation that leads to discipleship? While discipleship can happen in the ordinary, it still takes intentionality! A helpful way to do this is to ask good questions that prompt meaningful spiritual conversations.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

- *What is one thing that God is teaching you right now?*
- *How are you enjoying God lately?*
- *Where is an area in your life that you want to grow spiritually?*
- *Is there anything disappointing in life right now?*
- *Is there anything difficult you are going through right now that you would like to talk about?*
- *How can I be praying for you this week?*

NEXT STEPS:

ANSWER

What are some things you already do in life that you could simply invite someone else into? How could you intentionally engage in discipleship during these activities?

Are there any books of the Bible you would like to study with another person? Are there any Christian books that you could go through? (Write these down)

ASK

After you have written down and prayed about who to invite into discipleship.

Now it's time to actually ask! This whole guide is not meant to be more intellectual theory, but to help give you tools to actually **live this out!**

So take a step of faith, walk in courage and ask someone (or multiple) people to start meeting together. Even if you feel unprepared, you have to start somewhere. You have to just begin and learn on the job. You'll make mistakes, maybe somebody will say no. That's okay! The goal is loving obedience. Take the first step towards a life of being devoted to making disciples.

As Jesus ends His Great Commission, he adds the much needed encouragement to those of us who feel inadequate: ***"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."***

PART FIVE // RESOURCES AND FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What if I don't feel ready or don't know enough to disciple someone else?**

This is an understandable concern, and something we will always deal with because we are all still in process. Right before the great commission it says about the disciples "When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted" (Matt. 28:17 CSB). They weren't fully ready, but Jesus still commissioned them. You can still disciple someone and don't have to pretend that you know everything. A helpful response to a question can be "I don't know. But let's find out together."

- **How do I find somebody to disciple?**

Consider the relationships you already have. Is there anyone younger in the faith who you could come alongside? Think about people in your local church. Also pray for someone!

- **What if I don't have time?**

This is a serious and common concern. Many of us have jobs, spouses, kids, class, church and it can seem impossible to add one more thing. Rather than adding more, what if you changed how you viewed what you're already doing? Consider all that you do in a week. Is there any activity you could invite someone into regularly and have gospel conversation, pray, or make time to do a Bible study over a meal?

- **What is the difference between discipleship and evangelism?**

Discipleship and evangelism are closely related. Evangelism could be seen as the first step of discipleship. Before you can disciple someone to be like Jesus, they need to believe in and put their trust in Him. Discipleship is the lifelong process of helping people grow toward maturity in their faith. Evangelism is the starting point.

[Recommended Reading on Discipleship:](#)

- *Discipling* by Mark Dever
- *Multiply* by Francis Chan
- *Saturate* by Jeff Vanderstelt
- *Invitation to a Journey* by Robert Mullholland Jr.
- *The Other Half of Church* by Jim Wilder and Michael Hendricks

[Recommended Book Studies:](#)

- *In His Image or None Like Him* by Jen Wilkin
- *The Pursuit of God or Knowledge of the Holy* by AW Tozer
- *Crazy Love* by Francis Chan
- *Delighting in the Trinity* by Michael Reeves

[Family Discipleship Resources:](#)

- *The Family Discipleship Podcast* (Apple, Spotify, etc.)
- *Family Discipleship: Leading Your Home through Time, Moments, and Milestones* by Matt Chandler and Adam Griffin
- *The Intentional Father: A Practical Guide to Raise Sons of Courage and Character* by Jon Tyson (Specifically for boys)