



Discipleship Groups | Starter

At the heart of the Christian faith is “discipleship” or, in other words, being a learner of Jesus (Mt 28:18-20). Growing as a disciple of Jesus doesn’t happen on accident, intentionality is required. Therefore, we have created Discipleship Groups (DGs) which are small (2-5 people), gender-specific, biblical, and missional groups that regularly meet together for life-on-life intentional discipleship. The purpose of these groups is to cultivate **trust in Jesus**, **growth in holiness** and **missional living**.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

FOCUS. Trusting Jesus. Growing in holiness. Living on mission.

FORMAT. Text > Theology > Life.

DEPTH. We encourage conversation to go beyond mere behavior to the heart.

SIZE. 2-5 people, w/ 2-3 being recommended. If the group grows, we recommend multiplying.

GENDER. Men and women participate in gender-specific groups.

CONTENT. Bible. We recommend agreeing on a designated section of scripture to focus on each week.

PEER-TO-PEER. While a leader will likely emerge, DGs are intended to promote peer-to-peer discipleship.

COMMITTED. It is important for those involved to be committed to promote maximum depth and growth.

ORGANIC. Most successful DGs will be formed with those you are naturally drawn to.

FREQUENCY. We recommend meeting weekly or bi-weekly.

FOCUS: TRUSTING JESUS. GROWING IN HOLINESS. LIVING ON MISSION.

TRUSTING JESUS. The entire Bible can be summed up in two words: **trust Him**. Jesus is the good life. We were created by Him, for Him, therefore life-that-is-truly-life is only found in Him. Yet, the world, the flesh (i.e. that part of us that is not yet fully submitted to God) and the Devil do everything they can to dislodge, distort and distance our trust and enjoyment of Him. The greatest weapon we have against these opponents is a **Spirit-empowered faith** in the **promises of God** (i.e. who He is, what He has done, what He will do). What does that look like? This means we follow our Spirit-led promptings to believe in the promises of God rather than the promises of the flesh. Not the promise of pride to feel important, self-pity to medicate our poor self-image, sexual lust for satisfaction, or anger to get justice. The Spirit wants to empower us to believe better, true and lasting promises. So instead of trusting fleeting, fleshly promises, put your faith in the promises of God. Ask the Spirit to strengthen your faith to believe God over the flesh.

GROWING IN HOLINESS. To grow in holiness is to grow in Christlikeness. To grow in Christlikeness is to grow in your human-ness. But, we don’t drift into holiness. **Holiness is a harvest** (Gal 6:7). We have two strategies here. **First**, to grow, we must become well acquainted with the areas in our lives *where* the flesh gets the best of us, *where* we are prone to sin. When and where do you find the flesh awakened? In order to beat the flesh we have to know how, when and where it hits. Ask the Spirit to convict you of those sins that need to be fought and to help you better know your sin. **Second**, it is important to know *why* we are gravitating towards certain sins. Ask yourself why you are inclined to these sins. What do you believe they will do for you? Provide acceptance, satisfaction, self-worth, significance? Know the lie you believe when you give into the flesh. **The proof of your faith is that it fights**. Holiness is the result of a habitual weakening of the flesh through constant contending in the Spirit for life-giving victory over sin. God desires for us to kill our sinful behaviors, emotions and patterns of life so that we might fully experience the life He intends for us.

LIVING ON MISSION. To live on mission is to build relationships with others for the sake of the gospel, as friends not projects. Jesus’ *great command* is to love God and love others. Jesus’ *great commission* is to make disciples. Our discipleship is incomplete apart from seeking to make disciples. This may not mean you head off for the jungles of southeast Asia, but it may mean heading over to your neighbors. Followers of Jesus are to **declare** the good news of Jesus and **display** what a life looks like that has been gripped by that news. We recommend each person have **3-5 unbelievers** who they are regularly, lovingly pursuing and praying for. A weekly “missional” check-in is helpful to keep this at the forefront of our thinking.

FORMAT: TEXT > THEOLOGY > LIFE¹

TEXT. Your group should read the same biblical text during the week. **If the Bible isn't central, you'll end up relying on yourselves**, your experiences and your feelings. While other books can be helpful, nothing can replace the Bible. **If the Bible is central you'll be more likely to rely on Jesus.** Your group gets to decide what section of the Bible to read on any given week. We suggest reading at least one chapter per week and asking the Holy Spirit to draw your attention to what he wants to do in you. You may be prompted to repent of a sin, rejoice in a promise, meditate on an insight, or praise God for an attribute. Each week **make the text your initial focus** by sharing how the Spirit moved through the Word to change you.

THEOLOGY. Move from the text to theology by understanding the intent of the author. From there, try to understand the central theological message of the chapter. Ask yourself: "Where is Jesus and his work (i.e. the gospel) reflected in this text?" **Strive to be Christ-centered**, not application-centered. The goal is not to "apply" but to be awe-struck with Jesus, not to "do" but to delight in him. Then, from our delight in Christ and belief in his promises, we can apply the text to every day temptations and trials. **Make Jesus central!**

LIFE. As you move from theology to life, bring your life into the conversation. Allow plenty of time for this. Ask one another questions. Graciously and lovingly press one another to discern ungodly motivations and get to gospel motivations. This is not a Bible Study. **Share your lives, not your insights.** Confess sin and repent. Remember, Christ alone is sufficient for your failures and strong for your successes. Take it all to the Lord Jesus in faith-filled prayer for one another, on the spot, and not just afterwards. Finally, be sure to share the names of people you are trying to bless with the gospel. Pray as a group asking God to help you trust his promises, as well as asking him to give unbelievers in your life the very same gift of faith.

What Discipleship Groups are NOT:

- NOT a place for endless introspection and navel-gazing.
- NOT a legalistic or religious way to impress God and others.
- NOT a venue to display your vast biblical knowledge.
- NOT a group to help others while withholding from them.
- NOT merely a Bible study where you share your insights.
- NOT a time to just chat and catch up.

Examples of heart-level questions:

- What are you desiring more than anything else?
- What do you find yourself day dreaming about?
- What lies are you subtly believing that undermine the truth of the gospel?
- Are you astonished with the gospel?
- Where have you made much of yourself and little of God?
- Is technology stealing attention from your family?
- Is work replacing your spouse's place in your heart?
- Where do your thoughts drift to when you enter a social setting?
- What fears are paralyzing your heart from enjoying God?
- What consumes your thoughts when you have alone time?

Recommended Resources:

Fight Clubs, Jonathan Dodson
You Can Change, Tim Chester
The Cross Centered Life, CJ Mahaney
A Praying Life, Paul Miller

Additional Recommended Resources:

Redemption, Mike Willkerson
Gospel Centered Life, Bob Thune & Will Walker
The Enemy Within, Kris Lungaard
Battling Unbelief, John Piper
When People are Big and God is Small, Ed Welch
How People Change, Tim Lane & Paul Tripp
Instruments in the Hands of the Redeemer, Paul Tripp

¹ Adapted from "Fight Clubs" by Jonathan Dodson