The Disciple-Making Quick Start Guide



Almost Everything You Need to Know to Make Disciples

What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 2 Timothy 2:2 (CSB)

1. **Keep it simple.** It doesn't have to be complicated. You'll never be perfectly ready or have a perfect plan. Study what Jesus did and replicate that, learning as you go.

2. **Keep it spiritual.** Transformation is a result of the Holy Spirit's work in someone's life. As you lead and as you meet, rely upon the leadership and work of the Holy Spirit.

3. **Model maturity.** Be a healthy, maturing Christ-follower. That means you are willing to go the distance for Christ—*working* to become a fully-mature believer in every area (Eph. 4:15) while *realizing* perfection isn't achieved until heaven. The measure of maturity is obedience, not knowledge. Scripture reminds us of the importance of "teaching them to observe" (Matt. 28:18-20). The greatest lesson is a real-life example of maturity in Christ—you.

4. **Form a group.** Invite a person of the same gender, or better yet, two or three people, to meet weekly to encourage one another spiritually (Hebrews 10:24-25) by focusing on the Bible, prayer, Scripture memory, accountability, and learning from one another. These people can be new believers or just people in your church who need to reach full maturity. Let them know early that the expectation is that they would replicate this process. You will sometimes want to include non-believers in a discovery group that is handled a little differently regarding initial expectations.

5. **Start Strong** – Consider a Discipleship Covenant in which the group agrees to a set of expectations. Also, be clear from the beginning that the expectation includes replicating the process to disciple others.

6. **Meet weekly** with the group to lead, teach, encourage, and live life with the group until they are ready to disciple someone else. (See meeting outline and spiritual maturity steps on the back.)

7. **Keep the focus on God's Word.** A top priority is to get group members into God's Word daily. The best way is to select a Bible reading plan that you all read and discuss together. You may also consider a well-rounded resource, particularly with new believers, but focus the most attention on the Bible itself. You want a reproducible and sustainable process. Curriculum can easily become a hindrance because its completion becomes the end goal.

8. **Set "next steps" every week**. Group members will share weekly what they are learning from their time in Bible reading and what next steps the Holy Spirit is leading them to take. The steps should be measurable and attainable.

9. **Accountability**. Everyone in the group will report on their progress toward obedience, focusing on the prior week's challenge and desired next steps. This process should be encouraging and filled with grace, never demeaning.

10. **Memorize Scripture together**. Being organized and accountable greatly aids in success here. Quote memory verses early in your weekly meeting so that it doesn't get neglected. You can all memorize the same verse or have each group member select verses that are going to be helpful to their lives and come from their reading plan.

11. **Pray for one another**. In spiritual growth, God does the heavy lifting. Support one another through prayer, both in and outside of the group. Model care by following up on prayer requests outside of the group.

12. **Maintain 360-degree accountability.** The leader is also accountable to the group. That's a great way to model spiritual growth and show the group that discipleship is a lifetime journey.

13. **Spend time together outside of the weekly meeting.** One way to do this is to find activities you'd be doing anyway and involve others in that. Allow the disciples to see your life in real settings.

14. **Be transparent**. People need to see that you, your spiritual walk, and your relationships are not perfect. Your transparency is actually an encouragement to them.

15. **Share Leadership** – Once 4-6 weeks and a good routine, each member of the group will take turns leading.

16. **Practice spiritual influence.** To help group members become accustomed to sharing spiritual truth, ask them to share what they are learning or some Biblical truth with someone outside the group <u>every week</u>. Start with family.

17. **Challenge them to start spiritual conversations**. Many group members are not already equipped to share the gospel. Teach the group an evangelism outline early and often until each person can share it. Find ways to participate in evangelism conversations together, so that they learn by observing you share your faith.

18. **Learn the discipleship process**. Jesus modeled a process for us. Here are five steps to follow: a) I do, you watch. b) I do, you help. c) You do, I help. d) You do, I watch, and e) You do, someone new watches--the process cycles.

19. **Celebrate progress**. Find ways to celebrate progress and encourage those taking next steps.

20. **Follow a meeting outline** – The "Five Looks" are a helpful way to remember what to do each week.
    - **Look Around** – Fellowship. Just get to know one another. Enjoy and encourage one another. Talk about life.
    - **Look Back** – Scripture Memory & Growth. Practice Scripture memory and review last week's challenge to take next steps.
    - **Look Down** – Learning and growing from the Word. Group members share what they are learning and what God is calling them to do.
    - **Look Ahead** – Challenge. Determine specific and measurable next step goals. You might include challenges in three categories: Personal, Relational, and Missional. These grow out of your personal Bible study and the Marks of Maturity outlined below. Over time, equip group members in each of these.
    - **Look Up** – Prayer. Pray in the group if time allows, but at least share prayer requests.

21. **Evaluate the marks of maturity** – Use spiritual markers to measure progress and set next step goals. Because sharing Christ and disciple-making are the most challenging aspects of being a disciple, introduce those early and often in the disciple-making process. Disciples need to be equipped and proficient in all of these: worship, identity in Christ, Bible study, prayer, purity, Scripture memory, Biblical community, serving, the fruit of the Spirit, local and international missional engagement, evangelism, healthy relationships (family, work, church), and disciple-making.

22. **Invest significant but limited time** - The number of months you spend with someone is determined by their maturity and can be as little as three months for an almost mature believer, or as long as two years for a new believer. It's likely best to have a life cycle for the group. If a group member isn't ready to lead, allow him to cycle through again as co-leader. Do not allow someone to hang out forever. That's not building the kingdom.

21. **Release new disciple-makers.** When group members are ready to begin replicating the process, encourage them to do so. This may even be while you are still meeting weekly. At some point, release the group to replicate, but for a year following, maintain a relationship of encouragement and accountability while coaching them to disciple others. A monthly coaching meeting often works well.

22. **Dealing with a lack of progress or attendance** - Work with someone to determine hindrances they face. Help them plan for success. If growth is still at a standstill, the best use of your time is to find others who <u>are</u> willing. Have a meeting with the person who is struggling. It may be best to graciously release them from any obligation to the group and offer to pick up the discipleship again when he/she is ready and able to invest in the process.

Jay Gordon, Small Groups Minister, The Church at Brook Hills, Birmingham, Alabama