

DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY

Discipleship is not “a” ministry of the church – it is the core of everything that the church is called to accomplish. Therefore, everything that the church does should fit into its discipleship strategy. The mission is that EVERYONE who comes into the church, and is willing, be discipled – understanding that people are at very different stages and take different amounts of time in their journey. But, there is an end goal in mind for each person.

THE END GOAL: That each person grows to a point of spiritual maturity and competency, where they assume responsibility for their own spiritual growth and the spiritual growth and development of other individuals, and the church as a whole.

It is essential to understand that programs and bible studies DO NOT disciple people. **People disciple people.** Therefore, discipleship is only effective to the degree that you have **individuals who will intentionally and strategically focus on other individuals** to help them mature and, in turn, become disciple-makers.

Therefore, the church needs to create structures that ensures individuals are always being noticed, guided, and equipped for greater spiritual maturity and impact. No one person (except Jesus) is able to disciple a person in every area of life. Effective discipleship requires a community with diverse giftings and environments for growth.

ESSENTIAL DISCIPLESHIP ELEMENTS

There are four different aspects to the discipleship process. We have historically tended to focus primarily on “teaching”, but this is only one component. These elements do not happen consecutively – but concurrently. For example: a non-believer who is starting the process of exploring Jesus may start serving in a church in some capacity, may start talking to others about God regarding what they are learning, may start reading the Bible regularly, etc. The elements are simply areas we need to give serious focus as we strategize how best to disciple others.

Knowledge to Gain	Spiritual Disciplines to Embed	Ministry Skills in order to Serve	Missions Experiences to Engage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theological and biblical truths with practical application • Ministry/Mission Philosophy • Spiritual Life and maturity • Understanding of spiritual disciplines • Know how to study the Bible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bible devotional reading • Bible study • Prayer - personal & group • Tithing /Offerings • Accountability/ Confession • Consistent attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas of ministry effectiveness and service • Develop areas of strength/gifting • Be apprenticed for greater responsibility • Assume leadership responsibilities • Mentor others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach in personal spheres of influence: Salt, Ambassador, Image, Light • Outreach as part of a small group • Outreach as part of the collective church • Strategize local & global missions

DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS

We have broken the discipleship process into phases. Below is merely a guide for progression. A phase may take longer than a year. Each person progresses at their own pace.

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Belief & Baptism	Serving & Church Partnership	Leading a ministry	Mentoring others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start discipleship curriculum • Sense of belonging • Declare Jesus as Lord • Baptism • Helping out around the church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover giftings – serving in a specific ministry role • Micro Group/Triad participation • Partner/Member Commitment • Missional engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeship and increased responsibility • Receive ministry support and accountability • Missional engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church ministry leadership team • Coaching and being coached • Missional engagement

DISCIPLESHIP ENVIRONMENTS

Full discipleship cannot happen in one environment, such as a Bible study; it requires a multifaceted approach. Jesus utilized several different environments to help disciple his followers. Each environment has **specific goals** it tries to achieve in the discipleship process. There may be some overlap, but there are also very distinct impacts each environment should provide, or else it is redundant.

The discipleship process “formally” starts when a person enters a Discipleship Small Group, but there are many entry points for informal discipleship to begin.

Large Group:

Church services are opportunities to corporately disciple the larger family with a common vision, values and mission. It provides an opportunity for the family of God to identify as an extended family – much like a weekly family supper. Other church-wide sessions will be occasionally provided to help spur discipleship in specific areas. (Giftings Course, Financial Course, Marriage/Parenting Seminars, Retreats, Spiritual Deliverance, etc.)

Small Groups:

Small Groups are groups of approximately 6-15 people that provide:

- 1) Strategic discipleship teaching
- 2) Community support and prayer
- 3) Focussed missional engagement.

Small groups help cultivate a deeper sense of belonging and being known, and a safer environment for openness and sharing life issues. There is a broader base of spiritual gifting to help one’s spiritual growth than can be provided by a micro group. Yet, a more focussed impact than can be provided by giftings in the large gathering.



Small groups ideally have two leaders: Teacher & Shepherd to oversee the discipleship process. The Teacher and Shepherd are responsible to help guide the discipleship process for the discipleship goals of a small group. They should receive ongoing visioning, training, and accountability for the discipleship-effectiveness of the group.

Micro Groups:

Triads/Cadres/Accountability groups are groups of three (possibly four) people of the same gender. Ideally there should be a leader/mentor in each group who will assume responsibility for the direction and effectiveness of the group. The Mentor should receive ongoing visioning, training and accountability for the discipleship effectiveness of their group. Each group commits to a 10-12 month journey. They are designed to provide personal support and accountability to help individuals grow in areas of:

- 1) Personal/spiritual disciplines
- 2) Spiritual freedom – identifying and removing idols from their lives
- 3) Greater personal, missional effectiveness

These groups go much deeper and more intimate than is appropriate, or time-available, in small group.

Individuals:

Ultimately, the goal is that individuals grow in maturity (knowledge, disciplines, service and mission), becoming **self-feeders** who **assume spiritual responsibility** for the growth and maturity of others and the church. We expect that some who reach this stage will leave this church family to start a new church family either locally or abroad with the blessing and support of the church.

A strategy only works to the degree that:

- It is clearly mapped out
- Has clear goals
- Has built-in accountability structures
- Provides support to those carrying out the task

For each discipleship environment it is important that leaders in that environment fully understand what it is they are trying to accomplish in the discipleship process. Often, leaders can simply go about the “tasks” of a ministry without keeping the larger picture and ultimate goals in mind. For example, a small group teacher may possibly spend a whole year “teaching” the Bible, but notice no significant headway has been made in individual’s lives – they just “know” more.

By clarifying goals for each environment, you help the leader understand what it is they are really trying to accomplish. It gives them focus and helps them develop an action plan, both for the groups as a whole, and for each individual member under their care.

The following are some “sample” goals you might have for each discipleship environment. You will need to fine tune them to your specific ministry.

The idea is not to necessarily replicate what we have provided here, but to use it as an example of how to think through your ministries’ discipleship environments.

ENVIRONMENT GOALS

Below are the discipleship goals the ministry team leaders will strive to accomplish in the life of their **groups** and the **individuals** under their care. Leaders should meet regularly for visioning, equipping and to discuss their progress and the challenges they face.

LARGE GROUP	SMALL GROUP	MICRO GROUP	INDIVIDUAL
Goals for the Group			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective worship as a family • Corporate prayer • Corporate visioning and teaching – moving the church forward in unity • Sense of family – belonging • Welcoming environment for visitors • Collective missional engagement • Church planting and missions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful sharing and prayer time • Collectively seeking God for wisdom and discernment for people in specific situations • Prayer for healing when needed • Healthy group boundaries • Knowledge/Teaching as presented by curriculum and discernment of teachers/shepherds • Safe and open communication • Mission strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an environment for strategizing personal growth • Create a safe place for open and honest sharing • Provide accountability for disciplines and purity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planned Bible reading - Idol identification, repentance & goals for freedom • Prayer support • Provide accountability for personal, missional outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become a holy community • Become a Bible literate community • Become a compassionate community • Become a missional community • Become an “equipping” community • Become a disciple making community
Goals for the Individual			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to the church family, the gospel message and church ministries • Practical application of teaching • Learn how to worship • Opportunities to train and serve in areas of gifting • Participate in corporate missional engagement • Social engagement with their spiritual family • Develop a hospitality mindset for visitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness and transparency • Consideration and concern for others in the group • Meaningful contribution – discussion • Meaningful contribution – group mission • Praying out loud • God-conversations with others throughout the week • Inviting others to small group or church • Involvement in a micro group • Consistency (attendance, participation, spiritual disciplines, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness and transparency in sharing • Consistent devotional time • Identification of personal idols • Confession of sin struggles/bondage • Strategize to overcome spiritual bondages • Strategy for personal growth • Strategy for personal mission • In-depth Bible Study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intently pursuing holiness • Consistent devotional times • Intimate prayer and worship • Personal skill development • Personal outreach strategy • Praying for others on the spot when they share pressing concerns.