

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership
Leader's Guide

EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module titled Exploring Discipleship. This series of lessons studies the spiritual formation of a follower of Jesus Christ – the process referred to as discipleship. The discipleship process occurs after someone comes to faith in Jesus Christ, beginning with a desire to live out God's plan for their life. When we undertake the task of helping a new believer to grow in their faith, we are said to disciple them. This material will benefit anyone wanting to disciple others, especially those who are practising evangelism, following up with new believers and helping them grow in their faith. Discipleship is the duty of every believer, especially those in spiritual leadership!

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians, those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christianity, as well as those preparing to teach these Christian practices and beliefs. Also, those with an interest in Christian thought will find value in these lessons as they pertain to daily living and choices.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP

PURPOSE

Participants will understand the scriptural principles of discipleship. This will allow them to examine their own life as they prepare to disciple others and the important task of developing relationships.

LEADER'S NOTE

This lesson examines the concept of discipleship. Some participants in your group may have had experience discipling, while others may be new believers. Try to gauge where your group is at, and use the experiences of the more mature participants in your discussions. Stress that it is not the sole responsibility of the person discipling to see that a new believer matures in Christ; however, they do have a duty to try and provide the elements for growth. Before your participants begin this important work, they must examine their lives and strive to grow in their own spiritual walk. If they would lead someone, they should first be sure that they are obeying God in all things!

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ What do the words 'follow-up' and 'discipleship' mean to you?
- ❖ Have you had a mentor who taught you in the Christian faith and helped you grow spiritually? What was/is that relationship like?
- ❖ Who have been some of the role models in your life? What made them a role model, and what did you learn from them?
- ❖ Who were some of the people who helped you learn what it meant to follow Jesus? Did you have someone explain the Gospel to you? Someone to follow up with you?

STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH

- ❖ **The Objectives of Follow-up and Discipleship:** We would think poorly of any parent who willfully left a child alone without food, wouldn't we? Just as it is a parent's responsibility to feed, clothe and protect a new baby, all believers are called to give spiritual food to new



Christians. A new believer is like an infant in Christ who needs spiritual nourishment, protection, guidance and love. Following up with a new believer is the key to helping them mature in their faith.

- ❖ We might be excited to share the Gospel, but our work is not over after we lead people to Christ. We need to ensure they are trained to be disciples (true followers of Jesus). It is best to follow-up with a new believer 24–48 hours after they make a decision to follow Christ.

ASK PARTICIPANTS

- ❖ Read the following verses together. What are some of our responsibilities?
 - [Philippians 3:10](#)
 - [Colossians 1:28-29](#)
 - [Colossians 2:2](#)
 - [2 Timothy 2:2](#)

TEACH

- ❖ **God's Sovereignty in Follow-Up and Discipleship:** It is important to remember that only God can produce spiritual growth and He uses many means to do this. People, events, His Word and circumstances are a few examples. [Philippians 1:6](#) assures us that “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ”, and [Philippians 2:13](#) tells us that “it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure”.
 - Have you ever tried to share God's Word with someone and been frustrated with their response? Maybe they just didn't see the relevance, or perhaps they were excited about it but it didn't seem to make any difference in their life. Discipleship takes a great amount of patience. Not everyone we share with will receive the message the way that we think they should.
 - God allows people to respond differently to His Word. He deals with each of us in a unique way. Read [Mark 4:3-9](#) and [Mark 4:14-20](#) (the Parable of the Sower) and discuss its meaning as a group.
- ❖ **Our Responsibility in Follow-Up and Discipleship :** So if we are recognizing God's sovereignty in follow-up and discipleship, why is it so important for us to be involved, especially when someone seems particularly difficult or requires more patience than we have?
 - What do these verses say about the role of a discipler?
 - [1 Corinthians 3:5-9](#)
 - [2 Corinthians 3:1-6](#)
 - Consider also [Matthew 5:16](#) which says, “Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven.” When we disciple others, we can be sure they will be watching our lives closely. It is therefore necessary that we bring glory to God in all we do and say.



- ❖ **Elements of Effective Discipleship:** As we discover what discipleship relationships are all about and how we can build a healthy environment of discipleship in our church, or community of believers, we must identify its most important elements. These will be covered in greater depth in subsequent lessons.
 - **Prayer :** We cannot disciple others apart from God, so everything must be done with much prayer. We should pray with the new disciple in order to model prayer for them, and pray for them that their faith will grow.
 - o [Philippians 1:3-6](#)
 - o [1 Thessalonians 1:2-3](#)
 - o [John 17](#)
 - **The Word of God :** The Word of God is what we must teach disciples. It is important that they learn God's truth – not ours, and that they become reliant on the Bible – not the person discipling them.
 - o [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#)
 - o [Matthew.4:4](#)
 - o [1 Peter 2:2](#)
 - o [Romans.10:17](#)
 - **Love:** Discipleship must be done with love. As God loves us, we must love others and desire the best for them. A disciple will likely respond positively to chastisement, correction, teaching, and rebuke when it is done out of love (rather than power or sense of control).
 - o [1 Thessalonians 2:5-8](#)
 - o [1 Thessalonians 1:6](#)
 - o [1 Corinthians 4:16](#)
 - o [Philippians 3:17](#)
 - **Fellowship:** We cannot effectively serve Jesus apart from others. We learn from others as we teach them. Others can show us where we fail and encourage us to try again. We must introduce our disciple to others in the Christian community, and encourage healthy relationships.
 - o [Hebrews 10:24-25](#)
 - o [Ephesians 4:11-13](#)
 - **Evangelism and Service:** The goal of discipleship is that the disciple will eventually be able to share the Gospel with others. This might include doing evangelism together, or finding ways to practise serving and loving others.
 - o [1 Thessalonians 1:4-10](#)
 - o [John 1:43-50](#)
 - o [Mathew. 4:19](#)
 - **Trusting God:** We must understand the role of the Holy Spirit and trust God to produce growth in the life of the disciple. As you demonstrate your trust and faith in God, your disciple will be encouraged to do the same.
 - o [1 Thessalonians 1:5-6](#)
 - o [1 Corinthians 3:5-7](#)



DISCUSSION

- ❖ Consider that the life you live will be a stronger testimony than the words you speak. What do you need to change in your own life to provide a stronger and more faithful testimony?
- ❖ Look over the elements of effective discipleship. How can you incorporate each of these into a discipling relationship?
- ❖ What are the personal risks of discipling others? Would it be a temptation for you to put the responsibility for a new disciple's growth on yourself? Would you feel personally betrayed if they did not continue to mature in their faith? Examine what your likely response to these things would be.
- ❖ What parts of discipling a new believer are our responsibility? What does God say He is responsible for? What are the consequences if we try to do what only God can do?

PRAYER

Close the lesson in prayer. Pray that each participant would examine their lives closely and prepare themselves for the work of discipling others. Ask that God would give them opportunities, as they are ready, to lead others to Christ and to build His Kingdom through godly relationships. Pray for any fears or worries expressed by participants in the discussion portion of this study.