

# discipleship essentials

## Essentials for Spiritual Leadership Study 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!

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on [www.discipleshipessentials.org](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).



# EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP

## LESSON 1: INTRODUCTION TO DISCIPLESHIP

### WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

This lesson will help you understand the scriptural principles of discipleship. This will allow you to examine your own life as you prepare to disciple others and develop relationships with them.

### JUST SO YOU KNOW...

This lesson begins our exploration of the nature of discipleship. You may have a lot of experience with discipleship, or this may be a new idea to you – but either way, the material in this lesson will help renew your desire and ability to disciple others. When we lead someone to Jesus Christ, we must be prepared to help them grow in that faith. While it is not our sole responsibility to see that they mature in Christ, we do have a duty to provide the elements of growth. In order to do this effectively we should prepare ourselves. A good place to start is to ensure that we are first obeying God in all things!

## GETTING STARTED

1. Who have been some of the role models in your life? What made them a role model, and what did you learn from them?

2. 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? Or someone to follow up with you?



# STUDY

❖ **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.

- What are our responsibilities towards a new believer? Read the following verses and write down what you learn:

Philippians 3:10	
Colossians 1:28-29	
Colossians 2:2	
2 Timothy 2:2	

❖ **GOD'S SOVERIGNTY 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.

- Read the following verses. What does God promise about His work in our life?

Philippians 2:13	
Philippians 1:6	



- Have you ever tried to share God’s Word with someone and been frustrated with their response?

God allows people to respond differently to His Word. He deals with each of us in a unique way. Sometimes people don’t see the relevance of the Gospel, or perhaps they were excited at first but didn’t see the change in their life they were expecting. Discipleship takes a great deal of patience. Not everyone we share with will receive the message the way we think they should.

- Not everyone will receive the truth the same way. Read [Mark 4:3-9](#) and [Mark 4:14-20](#). What did Jesus tell us might happen to those who hear the truth?

God’s responsibility is to give faith, convict a person of their sin, and through the Holy Spirit give them the power to live in accordance with His will. Our responsibility is to ‘scatter seed’.

❖ **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	
Matthew 5:16	



We must bring to others the message we have been given. 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.

- For each of the elements below, look up the verses listed and write down what you learn.

<i>Prayer</i>	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.	<i>1 Thessalonians 1:2-3</i>
<i>The Word of God</i>	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.	<i>Romans 10:17</i>
<i>Love</i>	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).	<i>1 Thessalonians 2:5-8</i>
<i>Fellowship</i>	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.	<i>Hebrews 10:24-25</i>
<i>Evangelism &amp; Service</i>	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.	<i>1 Thessalonians 1:4-10</i>
<i>Trusting God</i>	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.	<i>Romans 8:28</i>

- If you are currently involved in a ministry of discipleship, how are the above elements incorporated into your work?



## IN SUMMARY

- ❖ The objectives of follow-up and discipleship are to help new believers grow in their faith and to equip them with the spiritual food necessary
- ❖ Our responsibilities in discipleship are to set an example and to teach what we ourselves have learned
- ❖ God is the one who produces growth in a new believer, and supplies the faith and the power of the Holy Spirit necessary.
- ❖ Elements of effective discipleship are prayer, the word of God, love, fellowship, evangelism and service and trusting God.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. 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?

2. 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.

3. 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?