

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership
Leader's Guide

EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP

LESSON 6: HOW TO BE A DISCIPLER

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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LESSON 6: HOW TO BE A DISCIPLER

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to highlight some errors and successes made in a mentor/ disciple relationship. It will also explain how to cultivate a positive relationship.

LEADER'S NOTE

This lesson will address some potential dangers in the discipleship relationship as well as give advice for a successful one. Keeping these things in mind when starting out will help begin a successful relationship. Help participants realize, however, that not every relationship is going to last, and some may end with the disciple walking away from the faith. This is not avoidable since people make their own choices. Being prepared for these realities should ease some fear and apprehension going into this new adventure. Your participants would benefit if you are able to share from your own experience of discipling others.

INTRODUCTION

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

- ❖ Have you had a mentor before? Who has influenced your spiritual journey most, and why?
- ❖ Do you feel ready to disciple someone? What do you need to learn, practise or experience before you will feel ready?
- ❖ It is said that 'actions speak louder than words'. How is this true in a mentor/disciple relationship? How does this make you feel?
- ❖ What have you learned in your Christian life that you would like to share with someone who is younger in their faith?

STUDY

Instruct the group on the following points.

TEACH

- ❖ **Discipleship requires Dedication:** Christians who are growing in their faith should be involved in sharing the Gospel as well as helping others grow in their faith (especially those they have led to Christ). Discipling someone takes planning and dedication. We cannot effectively spur each



other on to deeper relationships with God unless we are willing to offer our time and abilities long term. There are some things to personally consider as you undertake this relationship:

- **Prepare Yourself:** Effective discipleship is accomplished with thought and preparation. It may involve reading and studying a book of the Bible, preparing a list of frequently asked questions about Christianity and researching appropriate responses, or choosing some Bible study material to work through with them. You should show up to appointments with a plan.
- **Rely on God:** You must rely on God throughout the discipleship process, not only on your own words and ability. This can be a struggle for many of us, but it is necessary when doing His work.

❖ What To Do When Discipling

- **Pray Often** – It is important to pray privately for the person you are discipling, but it is also important to pray together with the person (1 Thessalonians 1:2). Remember, the person you are praying with might be uncomfortable at first. Seeing that you are comfortable with public prayer will help them become comfortable themselves.
- **Walk the Talk** – Make sure that you have examined your own life before you set yourself up as an example to others. In Luke 11:39-41, Jesus tells the Pharisees that although they are talking the talk, on the inside they are full of greed and wickedness. Later in Chapter 12, Jesus warns His disciples not to be like the Pharisees; “Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and whatever you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops” (Luke 12:1-3).
- **Quick to Listen and Slow to Speak** – Although James 1:19 does not specifically refer to discipling others, it is a good rule to follow. In order to understand someone, we need to listen to them first. Have you ever been interrupted while trying to tell someone something? Before you have finished, they try to relate what you are saying to something in their own life. Although their intentions might be good, they really come across as being far more interested in telling their own story than listening to yours. If this happens, let them talk, listen carefully, and then bring them back to the point of discussion.
- **Work Together with God and Others** - Read together 1 Corinthians 3:7-9. As tools in the hand of God and partners with our leaders, we must work in unity and rely on God for results.
- **Be Vulnerable** – *It's okay to share your own trials as long as the discussion remains focused on God and your advice remains Biblical in nature.* (James 1:2-5). It might be hard to admit your weaknesses, but it is important that the person you disciple sees you as a real person with real struggles, and to know that it is a normal part of our Christian life.

❖ What Not To do When Discipling:



- **Cross Gender Discipleship** – Discipleship requires an ongoing relationship and some vulnerability. A male/female discipleship relationship is not a good idea. If you cannot avoid such a situation, prayerfully consider discipling someone together with your spouse or with a friend that you could bring into the meeting. In group situations there may be both males and females participating, but people tend to be less vulnerable and personal in their sharing in such situations.
 - **Do not exhibit an overbearing sense of control** – Remember that discipleship is a two way relationship. The person being disciplined by you should feel comfortable to share anything in their own time. Your goal is to have them lean on God and rely on Him rather than on you. Setting up a schedule for them and giving them too many rules to follow does not allow them to rely on God.
 - **Do not be afraid to correct your disciple** - Sometimes a mentor or discipler will feel uncomfortable telling someone that they notice sin in their life. On the one hand, you want them to feel convicted of sin on their own and to lean on God for guidance through these situations. However, you also want them to be aware that others notice their sin. Use the Bible as your guide. [2 Timothy 3:16](#) tells us: “All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” Humility and love will go a long way in this area.
 - **Do Not Allow a Disciple to Rely Only on You** – The goal of discipleship is that the student grows in their faith and is able to teach and disciple others. They should be taught how to study the Word of God for themselves, find a Christian community to belong to, and eventually lead others. They should not rely on you for their spiritual food, but on the Word of God. The discipleship relationship should only last for a time. While you may remain lifelong friends, the purpose of the relationship should change.
- ❖ **Fruitful Work:** The outcome of a healthy discipleship relationship should always be to draw the person closer to God and strengthen them in God's Word. Just like evangelism requires time and patience, so does the act of discipleship. And just like you can make mistakes when sharing the Gospel, you can also make them while discipling a person. Consider the tips in this lesson when engaging in a discipleship relationship, and be willing to be taught by God as you go!



DISCUSSION

- ❖ Sometimes people falsely give the picture that leaders do not struggle or that they have attained perfect character when this is certainly not so. What would happen when mentoring a disciple if we didn't show any vulnerability or admit personal sin or error? What erroneous picture would our disciple get of Christian life?
- ❖ What are the benefits of one-on-one discipleship over group discipleship?
- ❖ Which of the list of things to do might be hardest for you? Being a good listener and being vulnerable are difficult for many people. How can you practise this?
- ❖ Can you think of other important things to do or not do when discipling others?
- ❖ What are some signs that a discipleship relationship needs to end? How long should this kind of relationship last?
- ❖ What are the consequences of not heeding the "what not to do" points? What might the results be if a discipleship relationship is handled poorly?

PRAYER

Pray for your participants, that they would grow in their faith and have the opportunity to mentor others in true relationships. Pray that they would grow in integrity and spiritual discipline as they apply the Word of God to their own lives and teach others to do the same.