

# discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership  
Leader's Guide

## EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP

### LESSON 7: WHAT AN IDEAL DISCIPLE LOOKS LIKE

#### 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](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).

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# EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP

## LESSON 7: WHAT AN IDEAL DISCIPLE LOOKS LIKE

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to highlight what an ideal discipleship relationship looks like by examining a few case studies.

### LEADER'S NOTE

While it is a mandate to make disciples of all people (not just tell them the Good News), it is not possible for any one person to disciple very many people at the same time. It is important to choose whom we disciple, and to know how to keep that relationship healthy. This lesson describes what an ideal discipleship relationship looks like, and provides some case studies of different ways discipleship can work. You may wish to prepare your own stories, especially if you have been involved in discipleship yourself for some time. Perhaps you are discipling the participants of this study. If so, teach this lesson to help them prepare for mentoring their own disciples!

## INTRODUCTION

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

- ❖ As you are looking forward to discipling others, how can you find a good candidate to disciple? What should you look for?
- ❖ What relationships do you already have that could turn into discipling opportunities? What makes a discipling relationship different from a friendship?
- ❖ What qualifications should a mentor have in a discipleship relationship? What should be their motivation for discipling others?
- ❖ Does your church or community of believers practise any regular system of discipleship, or in teaching new believers?

## STUDY

### TEACH

- ❖ **The Heart of Discipleship:** We all long for the comfort of a really good friend, someone who knows our hearts and sees us at our best and worst. Good friends stick with us and listen patiently when we are confused or upset, and encourage us when we are down.



- Jesus is our greatest friend, but we also need people in our lives who can be a channel of love and source of guidance as we grow in our faith. Newer believers are especially in need of godly friends.
  - A discipleship relationship is a strong bond between Christian friends that is strengthened through prayer. It may be a close friendship, but one in which one person is the disciple and the other is the mentor.
- ❖ **Choosing a Disciple:** There are times when a discipleship relationship occurs naturally. For instance, someone you have led to the Lord through friendship now needs someone to disciple them. They are hungry to learn more, and you set up times to disciple them regularly. Other times you may feel a call to disciple others, but do not know who to choose.
- **Choose Just a Few:** You cannot get deeply involved in 15 people's lives at once. It is best to choose just a few people to disciple at a time. After a period of one-on-one discipleship, these people may be brought together in a less intensive discipleship group, allowing you to invest in the lives of others. Even Jesus limited the number of men He disciplined!
  - **Is It a Good Fit?** You must consider whether it is possible to meet regularly with the person you disciple. Are your schedules compatible to meet together? Are you of the same gender? Do you have something to teach this disciple? If it's not a good fit, you might consider finding another Christian to disciple them.
  - **Are they Willing?** Some people are just not ready to be discipled, and are not interested in that relationship. Look for people who are willing, teachable, available and interested in what you have to say.
- ❖ **Types of Discipleship Relationships:** Each discipleship relationship may look different. We will explore a few different types in this lesson, but it is good to keep in mind that discipleship can occur at different times:
- **New Believer Discipleship:** This is also called follow-up to evangelism. It will help ground a new believer in the basics of their faith. This may include topics such as who God is, what it means to be a Christian, the significance of the Bible, how to study God's Word and pray. This may take place for a short period of time (perhaps a few weeks) until the new believer has found a church community, or several months to a year as needed. In this case, the discipler initiates contact and determines the length of time for discipleship.
  - **Spiritual Growth Discipleship:** This can happen at various points in a believer's life, especially when they have questions about their faith or need the accountability of a mentor to grow in it. All ages and stages of faith can benefit from this. Spiritual growth discipleship may be initiated either by a mentor offering to disciple someone, or an individual asking someone more mature in their faith to disciple them.
  - **Accountability Discipleship:** This discipleship occurs between two equals. They may choose to meet regularly to keep one another accountable for spiritual growth. They may check in to see how their friend is doing in maintaining regular Bible reading and



prayer. They may admit sins they are struggling with and pray for one another. Bible study and prayer should be part of these sessions. This may happen in small groups also. It is effective if all members agree to be honest, to hold one another to a high standard, and keep commitments to one another. As in all discipleship relationships, confidentiality is critical!

- **Specific Discipleship:** This can occur when discipleship is needed for a particular time in life or for a particular spiritual work. It might be an older pastor who discipled a younger pastor, or a mature Christian mother discipling a young mother in how to raise her children to know God. Usually the two parties have some interest or activity in common, and this may last for a season of life.
- ❖ **The Healthy Discipleship Relationship:** The following stories illustrate positive discipleship relationships. It is important to know that each relationship is going to be different, have different needs and last a different length of time.
  - Read these stories with your group, and identify the following components:
    - Why does this discipleship relationship work well?
    - Why are these two people a good fit for one another?
    - What is the disciple learning from their mentor that they could not learn another way?
    - What is the cost to the mentor of this relationship? What is the benefit?
    - How is this relationship growing the Kingdom of God?

*(Following this lesson are four stories you may present to your participants. You may choose to substitute your own stories or scenarios or adapt these stories to the needs of your participants.)*

## DISCUSSION

- ❖ Can you think of certain hurts or struggles you have had in your own life? How could these experiences be helpful as you mentor a young believer?
- ❖ In what ways do you think being a mentor would challenge you and help you grow as a Christian?
- ❖ What have you learned in this lesson about the discipling relationship?

## PRAYER

*Close the time in prayer. Thank God for His gift of other believers in our lives to guide, teach, and help us to grow. Pray that the participants would engage in spiritual multiplication by discipling new believers, who will in turn disciple others. Pray that the Holy Spirit would teach and guide them, and give them wisdom as they build His Kingdom.*



## MATT AND ROB

Rob's mentor, Paul, had once suggested that Rob should help Matt and be his spiritual guide. Matt had just accepted Christ as his Saviour, and felt a little lost in his new church. Matt felt encouraged having an older believer (Rob) look out for him. Rob and Matt got along quite well; they were good friends. They often met at coffee shops and discussed their problems over a cup. All Rob did was ask questions to get Matt to talk more, and the more Matt spoke about himself and answered Rob's probing questions, the more he was able to understand himself. Rob had a way of making Matt see the truth, even without giving him a word of advice. Matt felt so comfortable that he told Rob about his addiction to pornography and his unsuccessful attempts to quit. Rob could understand and help Matt since he had gone through the same difficulties and had been helped by his own mentor, Paul. Not only did Rob help Matt overcome his addiction, but now they pray for each other, that they will not fall back into temptation. Rob was able to teach Matt much by just being himself. Matt even learned how to be a good listener by observing Rob as he interacted with him. There are times when Matt is able to help Rob too. Rob struggled with logical thinking and apologetics, and had friends at work who constantly questioned his faith. Matt, on the other hand, was interested in apologetics and was well-versed in philosophy. So, Matt sometimes helped Rob logically understand his own faith. Their discipleship relationship has been such a source of encouragement to both Rob and Matt. Today they know they are available for each other when in need of prayer or a word of advice.

## JANE AND SANDRA

Jane and Sandra lived on the same street and got to know each other over time. After many talks about spiritual things, Jane led Sandra to accepting Christ as her Saviour. As a mature believer, Jane offered to meet with Sandra for a few weeks after her conversion to answer questions. The two began to meet in Sandra's home once a week, and Jane brought Sandra to meet other women at her Church where she had begun to worship regularly. Sandra's husband was hostile to Christianity, and Sandra needed Jane's support to know how to deal with this, and also how to teach her children about Christ. Sandra had some questions about her identity as a believer, and due to a low self-image, had difficulty believing she was loved and valued by God. Jane eventually learned that there were issues of abuse in Sandra's past that were affecting her current relationships, so Jane introduced her to a Christian counselor who was able to further help her. Together the two women read books or studied the Bible, and Sandra learned to rely on the Word of God and her new Church community. Eventually, Jane encouraged Sandra to start a Bible Study and prayer group at their church for other women whose husbands were not believers. This enabled Sandra to pray with others who shared her struggle and to disciple other women. Now, the group prays regularly for other women and their husbands, and Sandra has several disciples of her own. Years later when Sandra's husband put his faith in Jesus, Jane was there with Sandra to see his baptism. Jane and Sandra still meet once in a while, and Sandra knows that she can always ask Jane for help and advice. Jane feels blessed seeing the spiritual growth in her disciple, and now has Sandra's assistance running a ministry for women in their church.



## LILY AND DAVID

David is an older married man without children, who regularly spoke to students on a college campus about spiritual things. He found it an ideal location to evangelize and often found young people willing to talk. After meeting a group of young men and women and sharing with them the hope and peace that is found in a relationship with Jesus, one young lady, Lily, decided to follow Jesus Christ and prayed to receive forgiveness for her sins. She wanted to know more about God and how to have peace with Him. For many years Lily had felt as though her life had no purpose, and had been looking for something more than what the world offered her. David decided it would be wise to meet Lily at the cafeteria of her campus along with his wife, Nancy. Lily enjoyed meeting with David and Nancy and had many questions. She was hungry to learn about Jesus and eager to make changes in her life. Nancy was able to introduce Lily to a group of young women that Nancy was discipling. Lily became involved in the church and made many new friends. There were some topics that Lily preferred to talk about with Nancy apart from David; however, the three continued to meet as Lily felt she could learn much from both of them. Lily occasionally came for meals at their house and became a part of David and Nancy's extended family. Years later, David and Nancy attended Lily's wedding in their church. Lily now has children and raises them to love God. Lily considers David and Nancy her 'spiritual parents' and comes to them when she needs advice. David and Nancy feel they have gained a spiritual daughter, and have enjoyed watching her grow in her faith and become a woman devoted to God.

## PETER AND ANWAR

Peter met Anwar while doing evangelism in a remote town. Anwar had learned of the Gospel through a radio program and was eager to learn more about Jesus, but knew of no other believers in his area. Peter was able to introduce Anwar to another couple who had recently become Christians. Peter gave Anwar both written and digital materials to learn more about God, and also gave him a Bible. When Peter returned to that town to visit Anwar a year later, he learned that Anwar had begun a small house church and was leading more people to the Lord. Anwar felt a calling to lead other believers, but was struggling in some ways due to a lack of knowledge. Peter decided to disciple Anwar. He initiated regular telephone calls and the occasional meeting to help Anwar grow in his faith and knowledge of God. Since Peter was a pastor and evangelist, he felt connected to Anwar, and knew he had much to teach him. Since Anwar had never experienced a church setting, he struggled to set up church meetings and to know what to teach his own disciples. He did not understand the practices of baptism and communion, or how to approach issues, such as counseling someone who was dying. Peter arranged for Anwar to visit him in the big city and spend some time meeting with believers in the church, in order to see how they serve one another, what they teach, and how they help their community. Anwar's church is now growing and participating in evangelism to neighbouring towns, because of the support and resources Peter offers him as his mentor. Peter sees his spiritual outreach expanded through Anwar, and is energized by Anwar's infectious faith.