

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Spiritual Leadership Study 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!

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.

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EXPLORING DISCIPLESHIP

LESSON 7: WHAT AN IDEAL DISCIPLE LOOKS LIKE

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

The purpose of this lesson is to highlight what an ideal discipleship relationship looks like by examining a few real-life examples.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

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 others at a time. This is why it is important to choose whom we disciple, and to know how to keep that relationship healthy. This lesson will provide some ideas for what an ideal discipleship relationship looks like even so far as providing some case studies of a few different ways that discipleship can work. Don't feel constrained by these stories – there are many ways that discipleship can work!

GETTING STARTED

1. As you are looking towards discipling others, how can you find a good candidate to disciple? What should you look for?

2. What relationships do you already have that could turn into discipling relationships? What makes a discipling relationship different from a friendship?



STUDY

- ❖ **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 can be our greatest friend, but He also places people in our lives who can be a channel of love and source of guidance as believers grow in the faith. Newer believers are especially in need of godly friendships.
 - A discipleship relationship is a strong bond between Christian friends that is strengthened through prayer. It may be a close friendship, but one person is the disciple and the other is the mentor.
- ❖ **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 different times when discipleship can occur:
 - **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, what the Bible is, how to read and pray. This may take place for a short period such as 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 the period of time for discipleship.
 - **Spiritual Growth Discipleship:** This can happen at various points in a believer's life, especially when they have questions of faith or need the accountability of a mentor and discipler to grow. All ages and stages of faith can benefit from this. In this situation, either a mentor can offer to disciple someone, or an individual may ask someone more mature in their faith to disciple them.
 - **Mutual Accountability:** This is discipleship that 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 regular Bible reading, or service is going. They may admit sins they are struggling with and pray for one another. Bible study and prayer can also occur. 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.
 - **Specific Discipleship:** This can occur when discipleship is needed for a particular time in your 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 and how they might work. It is important to know that each relationship is going to look different, have different needs and last a different length of time. For each of the stories below, answer the questions that follow.

MATT AND ROB

Rob's mentor, Paul had once suggested that Rob should help Matt and be his spiritual guide. Matt was actually a little lost at that time, because he had just accepted Christ as his Saviour, and had also felt a little lost in this new church with new faces. So, he felt great having someone like an older brother look out for him. Rob and Matt got along quite well; they were good friends. They often met at coffee shops as they shared a liking for coffee and discussed their problems over a cup. All Rob did was ask questions to get Matt to talk more, and the more he 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 porn and his unsuccessful attempts to quit. Rob could understand and help Matt as he had gone through the same difficulties and had been helped by his own mentor Paul. In the end, not only did Rob help Matt overcome his addiction but now they pray for each other, that both of them will not fall into temptation; because it is so easy to slip and get back to square one. Rob was able to teach so much Matt by just being himself. Matt even learnt 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 he 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. The discipleship Relationship has been such a source of encouragement to Rob and Matt that even today they know that the other is just a call or sms away when in need for instant prayer or a quick word of advice.

1. Why does this discipleship relationship work well?
2. Why are these two people a good fit for one another?
3. What is the disciple learning from their mentor that they could not learn another way?
4. What is the cost to the mentor for this relationship? What is the benefit?
5. How is this relationship growing the Kingdom of God?



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 over the 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 began 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 from someone whose children were grown. Sandra had some questions about her identity in Christ, and had difficulty believing she was loved and valued by God due to a low self-image. Jane eventually learned that there were issues of abuse in Sandra's past that was affecting her current relationships, and Jane introduced her to a Christian counselor who was able to further help Sandra. 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 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 to women in their church.

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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 and Peter left Anwar with written and digital materials to learn more about God, and 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's felt a calling to lead other believers but was struggling in some ways for lack of knowledge. Peter decided to take Anwar on as a disciple and began 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. Anwar struggled to set up church meetings and to know what to teach his own disciples, having never experienced a church setting. He did not understand the practices of baptism and communion, or how to approach issues he was facing such as counseling someone who was dying. Peter arranged for Anwar to visit him in the big city and spend some time meeting the believers in the church there 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 a mentor. Peter sees his spiritual reach expanded through Anwar, and is energized by Anwar's infectious faith.

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IN SUMMARY

- ❖ God places people in our lives who can be a source of love and guidance as we grow in our faith. New believers are especially in need of godly friendships.
- ❖ A discipleship relationship can be a strong bond between Christian friends that is strengthened by prayer.
- ❖ There are times when a discipleship relationship occurs naturally and other times it must be intentionally pursued.
- ❖ There are many kinds of discipleship relationships for different stages of life and different needs.
- ❖ Every discipleship relationship should be advancing the Kingdom of God, for the purposes of spiritual growth and training in righteousness.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of certain hurts or struggles you have had in your own life and how these experiences could help you as you mentor a young believer?

2. In what ways do you think being a mentor would challenge you and help you grow as a Christian?

3. What have you learned in this lesson about the discipling relationship?