EQUIP

DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING



CROSSROADS
FELLOWSHIP

EQUIP- Discipleship Training

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Special thanks to the Communications Department of Crossroads Fellowship for the design, editing, and production of this manual.

Equip Discipleship Training

Let me invite you into a closer, more intimate walk with Jesus. If you have had some negative experiences with attempts at discipleship in the past, I encourage you to look at this with fresh eyes and give it a chance. There are no "one size fits all" plans for guaranteed spiritual growth. The most sure fire plans usually involve a loss of control, suffering, hardship and a desperate reliance on God. Have you been through one of those "discipleship" periods?

I am asking you to commit to being open to an experience. Surfing is a good illustration for this. When you surf, the power to move across the water comes from the wave. You can have great waves and a solid board, but without a proper posture on the board you will plop right back in the water. Your knees need to be bent, your arms out and your eyes and weight forward. In the same way, your posture or position as a learner is critical to your receptivity for spiritual things.

You will find familiar practices described and encouraged in this material. But you will also find a fresh perspective with an understanding that there are no cookie cutter people and that there are many ways people grow in their relationship with the Lord.

Ultimately spiritual growth comes only from the Spirit of God, period. It is my prayer that God's Spirit gives us all a great ride!

Are you ready to join the journey?

Let's Go!

SESSION 1

The Purpose of Equip Discipleship Training

Matthew 28:19-20
Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Overview

Jesus said "Go and Make Disciples." Most churches are content with making converts and convincing them that church is so fun and helpful that they should invite their friends to join as well. While a fun and helpful church is part of God's plan, it falls short of Jesus' command and the example He set. Jesus personally influenced others toward growth and development. He didn't just encourage us to make converts, He commanded that we "Go and make disciples" so that we could teach them everything. It only stands to reason that "everything" would include the idea that they should also, "Go and make disciples."

> **2 Timothy 2:2** And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

God's vision is for faithful people to influence others to become faithful people who will continue this cycle. The vision for this "Equip" discipleship training manual is to present material specifically designed to describe the process of helping believers walk down the path toward becoming fully devoted disciples and helping others do the same.

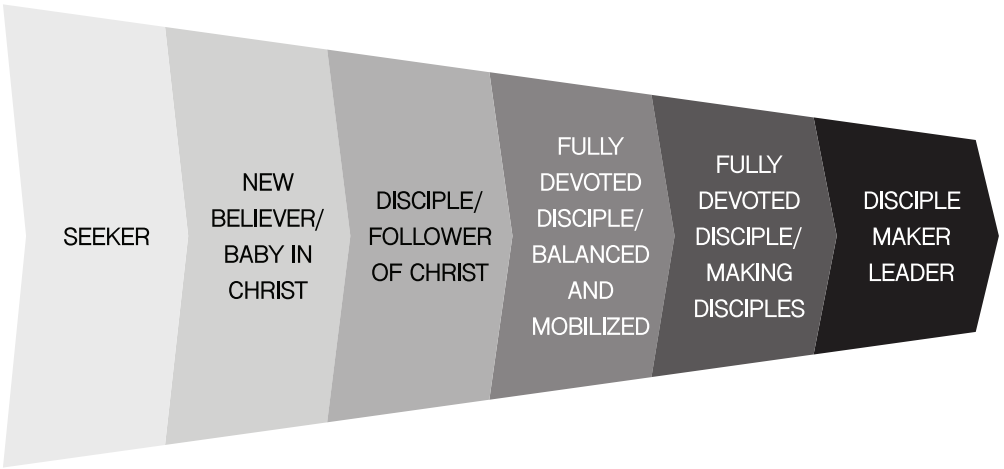
Spiritual-Personal Development

Jesus challenges those He encounters to grow. To the woman at the well He said, "Go and sin no more." To the rich young ruler He said, "Go and sell all your possessions." How would Jesus challenge you today?

The answer requires a little self-examination and self-awareness of where you are currently.

Where do you see yourself in the process of your personal spiritual development? How is God continuing to grow you into His image and prepare you for your ministry that lies ahead?

In the diagram below, draw an arrow pointing to the segment that best describes where you are in your personal spiritual development.

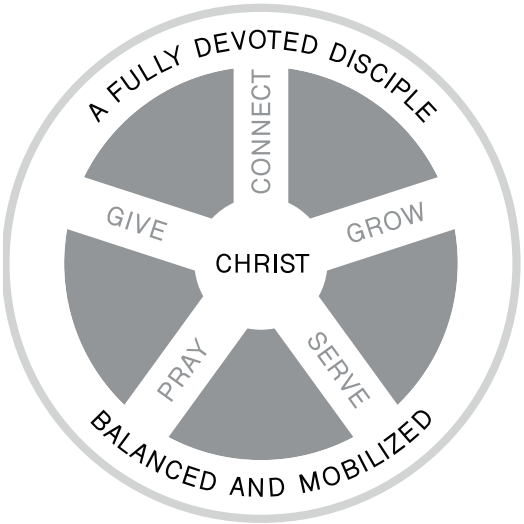


Defining A Disciple

As stated in Matthew 28, Jesus' goal is to help us become disciples who are making disciples. So how do we get there? In the diagram above, there is a segment labeled Fully Devoted Disciple/Balanced and Mobilized. What do you think this means? *In the space below, write your definition of the phrase "Fully Devoted Disciple/Balanced and Mobilized."*

A Fully Devoted Disciple Balanced and Mobilized ...A Definition

"A Disciple's life begins with connection to God through a relationship with Christ..."



The illustration above helps describe the Fully Devoted Disciple.[1] A disciple's life begins with connection to God through a relationship with Christ (as indicated by the center hub.) The spokes of the wheel represent a disciple's life of Connecting, Growing, Serving, Praying and Giving of their time, talents and possessions. The goal is to live life for Jesus with these disciplines active and balanced, and to become and remain mobilized for ministry.

How did your definition compare? What elements were lacking in your definition of a Fully Devoted Disciple? What is the shape of your wheel? Based on the strength of your spokes, is it round or kind of lopsided? *Draw it below.*

A Personal and Relational Process

At Crossroads Fellowship there is a pathway that begins with the Welcome Center and continues with Starting Point, etc. The goal is to help people become a disciple and transform their community. Although you are following a church process, there is a personal process happening as well.

CHURCH PROCESS



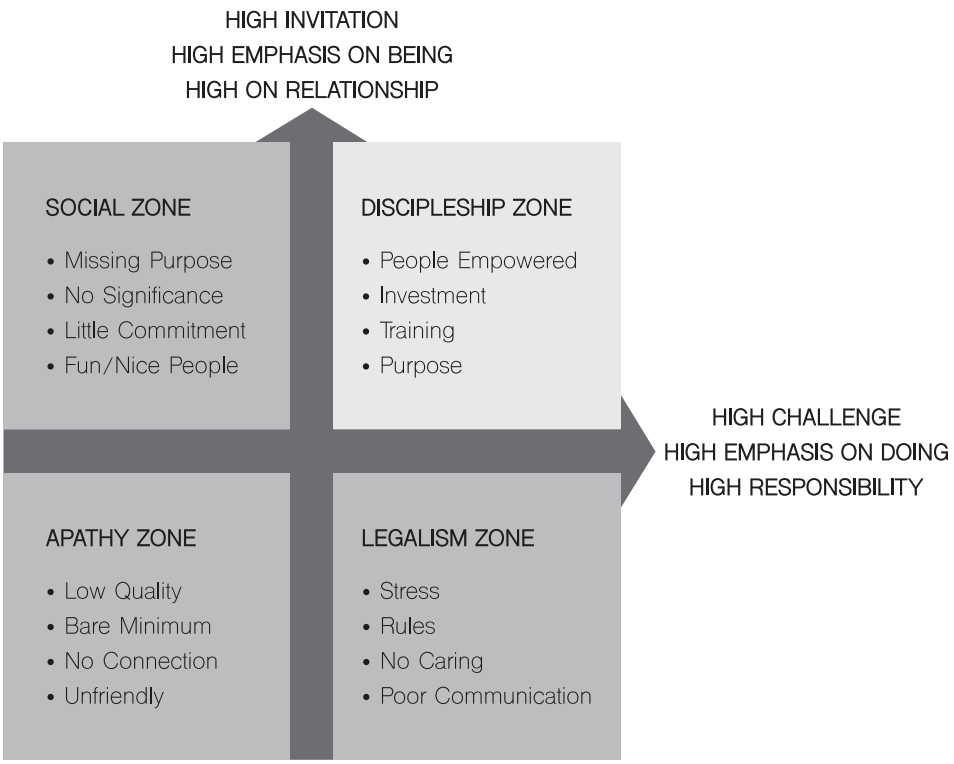
PERSONAL PROCESS



God may be calling you to a personal process. How is the church process different from your personal process? As you consider the next steps in your growth, what part of the personal process needs to grow or be renewed in your life? *Take time to write your thoughts in the space below.*

Creating the Discipleship Zone

Many churches do not have a culture of discipleship. Why is that? Most have probably drifted into one of the four cultures or zones below.



On the diagram[2] above, place a star in the quadrant or zone that you believe describes your church's culture or zone. Circle the quadrant or zone in which you would prefer to operate. The path toward creating the Discipleship Zone is a path that emphasizes relationships and responsibility.

Let's create a culture where we can value each relationship uniquely (High Invitation and High on Relationships), and at the same time have a culture that has high expectations (High Challenge, and High Responsibility). We call this the Discipleship Zone. In this zone, we follow Jesus' ways and practices as He challenges us to go and grow.

As you think through how to apply what you will be learning through this training, listen to the Holy Spirit and grow in the way that is best for you personally. Don't get me wrong, we want you to grow; we love you too much to want you to stay just the way you are. But how you grow and accomplish these objectives must be personalized based on all the factors that describe your life. Just as Jesus challenged Zacchaeus differently than the Rich Young Ruler, He also challenged the Pharisees differently from His disciples. He knows where you are and what you need. Trust Him to guide you through a process.

We will be presenting various practices of Jesus and His ways in hopes of inspiring each of us to be more like Him. How you decide to use this in your own life is very much a personalized journey. Remember, you have our permission to personalize this as much as needed.

Scripture Memory

Matthew 28:19-20
Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Matthew 6:33
But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Next Steps

- *Memorize this session's two Scripture Memory verses.*
- *Read through the content in Session One and respond to the questions by writing your answers in the book.*
- *Look for ways to positively change your personal process and your church culture.*

Questions for Discussion

1. Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself to the group. Share where you grew up and one great memory about your hometown.

2. As you heard the vision for this training, what excited you the most? Is there anything that makes you nervous?

3. What has been your past experience with discipleship training? How did that go for you? How do you hope this is similar or different?

2 Timothy 2:2
And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

4. Read 2 Timothy 2:2 on the left. What are some observations from this passage? What is Jesus asking of us? What obstacles do you see in getting this accomplished?

5. In what way will you personally need new eyes to get the most from this new experience?

6. *Memorize the Scripture Memory verses on page 12. Close your time with prayer.*

NOTES:

SESSION 2

Lordship - Christ the Center

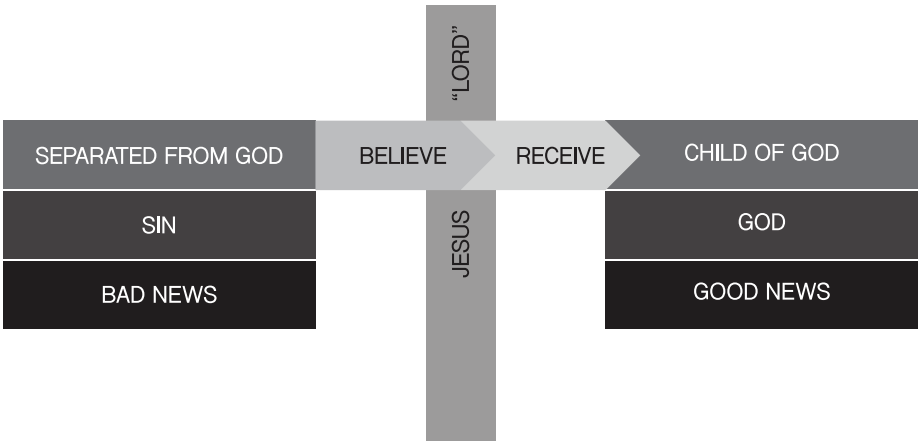
Romans 6:23
For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Salvation: The Beginning of our Connection To God

Responding to the gospel is the beginning of our relationship with Jesus.

> **Romans 10:17** "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ."

So what is the message that Romans 10:17 is referring to? It is the gospel. When you accept Jesus into your life, you have become saved, and "Saved People, Save People." You will want to share your freedom and hope with others. To become a trained disciple and have the ability to train others, you need to clearly understand the gospel and how to convey it. One of the most straightforward ways to hear the gospel message is by the "One Verse Method," drawn out below.[1]



John 1:12
Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

The Gospel

John1:12 makes it clear that God wants us to be His children. However, our sin has separated us from Him. If we stay in our sin, we will remain separated from God for eternity. That's the bad news. The good news is that God has provided a way to be free of our sin and have eternal life in Heaven. How does this happen? It happens through Jesus, God's Son. He came and died on a cross for us. If we make Him Lord and follow Him, we will become a child of God. Do you believe this? Would you like to respond to this personally and receive this good news into your life? This gift you receive is the gospel (good news)!

Salvation - A Moment in Time

Our initial response to the gospel, inviting Jesus to be Lord and Savior, is the moment of our Salvation. When and how did this event happen in your life? *Take a moment and write out the circumstances surrounding your salvation.*

Although someone can be ministered to for years prior to salvation, their salvation experience begins with a mental expression of faith. They believe the truth of the biblical message and apply it to their lives personally through a response of faith. This moment of time is the beginning of Lordship. The Bible calls this theological event Justification and Redemption.

Take a few moments to look up these important words, either through a Google search, Bible dictionary or other method. Write out a good definition for each of them:

- **Salvation** (Luke 1:77, Titus 2:11, Hebrews 2:3)

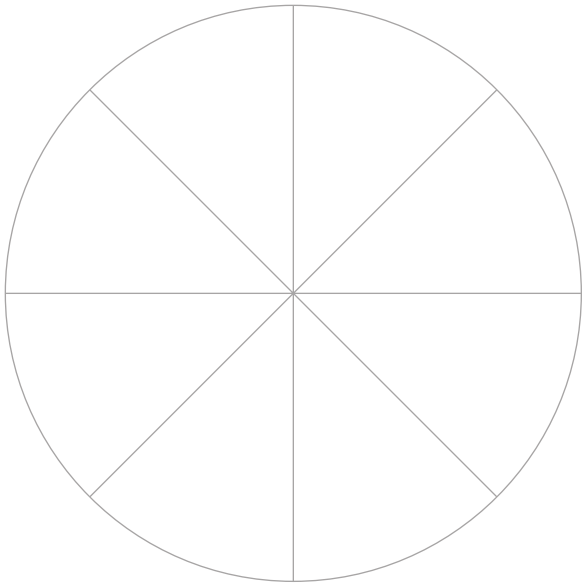
- **Faith** (Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 11:1 & 6, Galatians 2:16)

- **Redemption** (Colossians 1:14, Romans 3:24, Ephesians 1:7)

- **Justification** (Romans 4:25, Acts 13:39, Romans 5:16 & 18)

The Areas of Your Life

Draw your life as a pie, describing the key segments or areas of your life. These segments might include things like career, hobbies, spouse, parent, friends, money, kids, thought life, etc.



The process of continuing to submit to the Holy Spirit's leadership does not stop.

Lordship-A Process over a Lifetime

Once you have responded to the gospel by inviting Jesus to be Savior and Lord of your life, a process begins where you learn how to yield control of your life to His loving leadership. This work is an ongoing process called Sanctification. During this process a New Believer begins to willingly submit to Jesus' love and control. Even as one becomes a disciple and a disciple maker, the process of continuing to submit to the Holy Spirit's leadership does not stop.

Where are you in this process? In the diagram above, what areas of your life need to be submitted into closer alignment with God's will?

Our Ongoing Connection to God-Lordship

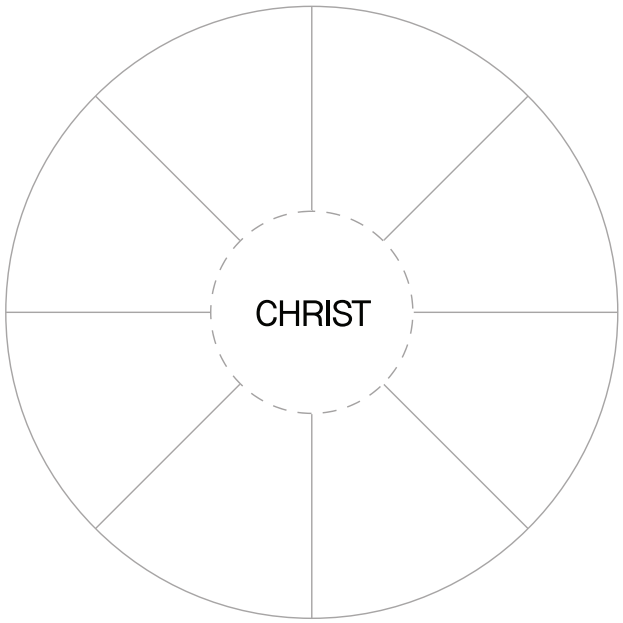
Take a few moments to evaluate your practice of the Lordship of Jesus in the various areas of your life. A good way to determine if Christ is in control is to ask, "Am I willing to do whatever Christ desires in this area?" "Will I be able to thank God for whatever may happen in this area?" Place an asterisk in the segments of your pie where you feel Christ is not "in control" as He should be.

Galatians 2:20 speaks to this area of Lordship. Meditate on this verse and think through how living out its message would impact the areas of your life that are not under Christ's Lordship as they should be. In the space below, share your insights and how you believe your faith could transform the various aspects of your life.

Galatians 2:20
"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.
The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Life Centered On Christ

In the diagram below, rewrite your Life's Diagram.[2] This time order your various activities around Christ as the Center. Jesus wants your "Life of Faith" to influence every area of your life, rather than your "Christian Faith" only being one segment. Make your drawing reflect this.



SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Romans 6:23
For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:17
Therefore, if any one is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!

Next Steps

- *Memorize the two Scripture Memory verses for this session.*
- *Practice the "One Verse Method" to understand and convey the gospel.*
- *Look for opportunities to reflect Lordship in all areas of life.*

Questions for Discussion

1. Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself to the group. Share how long you have been connected with church and in what areas of ministry you have participated.

2. As you listened to today's session, what stood out to you as most interesting or helpful?

3. Take a moment and reflect on the various areas of your life in the pie diagram. Describe the various segments that fill your life.

4. Read Galatians 2:20. In light of what Jesus has done for you, how do you live your life by faith? As you think about your life re-ordered with Jesus at the center, what area of your life will be most affected by this change?

5. In what way will learning a simple "One Verse Method" of understanding the gospel be helpful to you?

6. *Review the "One Verse Method" of sharing your faith. Memorize the Scripture Memory verses for this session on page 20. Close your time with prayer.*

NOTES:

SESSION 3

Connect - Fellowship

Our Need for Others

The first behavior of a disciple is to Connect to others. We were meant to do life together and were all born with a desire to belong.

If you have ever stood before a sequoia tree, you may have felt in awe of how tiny you were in its presence. Sequoias are the largest living things on the earth. They reach 250 feet tall and live for as many as 1,500 years. How have they grown so tall and lived so long? Surprisingly, it is not because of deep roots; their roots are actually only about 4 feet deep in the ground.[1] The reason for the height and longevity of sequoias is that there are other sequoias surrounding them. Sequoia trees only grow in groves. Their roots don't go very deep, but they intermingle with the other sequoias next to them. Each tree is able to stand strong through the centuries because each tree has an interdependent posture. No sequoia grows alone, just as no believer is transformed alone.

Read Proverbs 27:17 and Ecclesiastes 4:9-10. In the space below answer, "Why is fellowship important?"

Proverbs 27:17
Iron sharpens iron,
So one man
sharpens another.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10
Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.

Luke 8:6
Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture.

The Posture of Interdependence

While there are many resources available for individual spiritual growth, community is necessary for growth to happen. It is destructive for believers to attempt to live and develop faith on their own. Solo believers are a target for the enemy and more susceptible to the power of sin. Good seed sown in an independent person's life is like sowing seed on rocky soil. Growth comes up but the plant withers (Luke 8:6). Dietrich Bonheoffer, author of *The Cost of Discipleship*, said, "Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him."[2]

Perhaps your "posture" is better understood when described as your position, attitude or mindset. A dependent mindset is unhealthy because it finds security and worth in another person rather than in Christ. By finding ultimate fulfillment in someone other than God, dependence becomes a form of idolatry. Transformation is most likely to occur when a believer has truth applied to his or her life while in an interdependent position.



On the scale above, place an "X" representing where you see yourself and your need for "others." In the space below, write how you describe your current attitude toward connection and fellowship?

Having an interdependent posture is more than merely attending a small group or class. You must also be in a place of openness. It is necessary to be vulnerable and transparent for transformation to happen. Both a small group leader and the environment must balance vulnerability without fostering an unhealthy dependence or independence.

"Faith is always personal, but never private."
- Jim Wallis[3]

Through the biblical narrative, community is emphasized and commanded; it is never optional. Many have a misconception that the Christian faith is private. Jesus desires that His followers live with an interdependent posture in community with other Christian believers.

Jesus-His Desires for Our Relationships

In the hours leading up to His arrest, Jesus begged the Father to make His disciples one. He prayed:

> **John 17:20-23** I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in Me through their message. May they all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so the world may believe You sent Me. I have given them the glory You have given Me. May they be one as We are one. I am in them and You are in Me.

Jesus desires for His people to be unified as He and the Father are unified. God, who exists in community, designed His followers to live in community to facilitate growth and to reflect His character.

Hebrews 10:24-25
And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

What do you believe is the purpose of meeting together as believers? *Read Hebrews 10:24-25 and write your answer in the space below.*

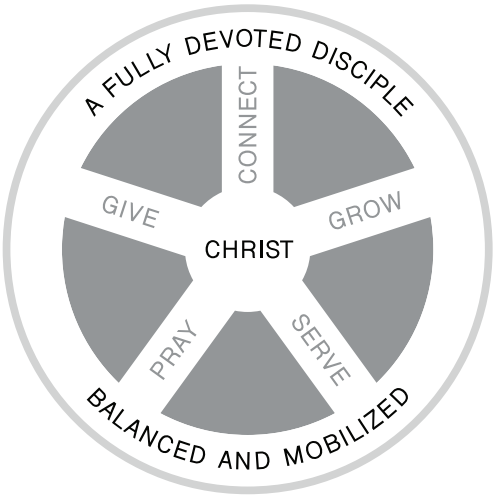
Devoting Yourself to Fellowship

When the first Christians responded to the gospel, they immediately threw themselves fully into community with one another. Acts 2:42 says, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship (koinonia)." Koinonia expresses participation, not just association. Transformational community is much deeper than mere association because of proximity. It is shared partnership for spiritual growth.

Steve Murrell, a well-known Christian leader, defined discipleship in this way:

> "It's following Jesus. It's fishing for people. And it's doing that in conjunction with others, in fellowship with others. Discipleship is simply helping someone find and follow Jesus. Helping someone live out relationships with the lost, fishing for men, and helping someone do that in community with others."
>
> *– Steve Murrell, Founding Pastor of Victory Church*[4]

As a church, Crossroads Fellowship believes discipleship consists of five disciplines: Connect, Grow, Serve, Pray and Give. Connection implies both a connection to God, and a connection with others–to the church and at its best, to transformational relationships.



SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Proverbs 27:17
Iron sharpens iron,
So one man
sharpens another.

Hebrews 10:24-25
And let us consider
how to stimulate one
another to love
and good deeds,
not forsaking our
own assembling
together, as is the
habit of some, but
encouraging one
another; and all the
more as you see the
day drawing near.

Describe below how you are connected to the body of Christ through fellowship. Is the quality of your fellowship sufficient for your growth and development, or is this an area needing some improvement in your life? If so, what changes are you thinking?

Next Steps

- *Is there anyone with whom you are not in fellowship because of sin or a disagreement that could be reconciled? Consider doing something this week to improve this relationship.*
- *Do you have proper Christian Fellowship in your life? If not, plan to improve it.*
- *Memorize the two Scripture Memory verses for this session.*

Questions for Discussion

1. Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share where your favorite place in the world is and why.

2. As you listened to today's session, what stood out to you as the most interesting or helpful?

3. Why do you think fellowship is important? What is the purpose of fellowship? (Proverbs 27:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Hebrews 10:24-25)

4. Where did you place your "X" on the continuum between independence and dependence? What words describe your current posture toward fellowship?

Questions for Discussion (continued)

5. Read Ephesians 4:2-3. What can separate people from each other in the body of Christ? What helps to preserve unity?

6. In your understanding of Christian Fellowship, how important is a small group?

7. Describe how you are connected currently in fellowship. Is the quality of your fellowship sufficient for your growth and development? If not, what do you think would be helpful?

8. *Memorize the two Scripture Memory verses for this session on page 27. Close your time with prayer.*

NOTES:

SESSION 4

Grow - God's Word

How Growth Happens Through His Word

The second behavior of a disciple is to Grow. God has chosen to bring transformation to His people through the truth of His Word. Maybe you have heard it said that we will either grow daily or die gradually. This has been true in my life, and daily growth comes through God's word. But so often, it seems we choose to die gradually rather than grow daily. Why?

Whether you grow or not, has much to do with your posture or attitude. Disciplines can simply be a religious exercise that produce no growth, or they can be the vehicle that carries you into a deep and active relationship with the Lord. Consider what must happen when you water ski. When you are skiing behind a boat, you can't get up on your own power. Your posture on the skis makes all the difference as to whether you will get up and enjoy your time on the lake, or never make it out of the water.

What is a posture that helps you respond to God's Word and grow? *In the space below write some characteristics that would help a person have the correct position to grow as the Holy Spirit interacts in their life through God's Word.*

The Sweet Spot of Transformation

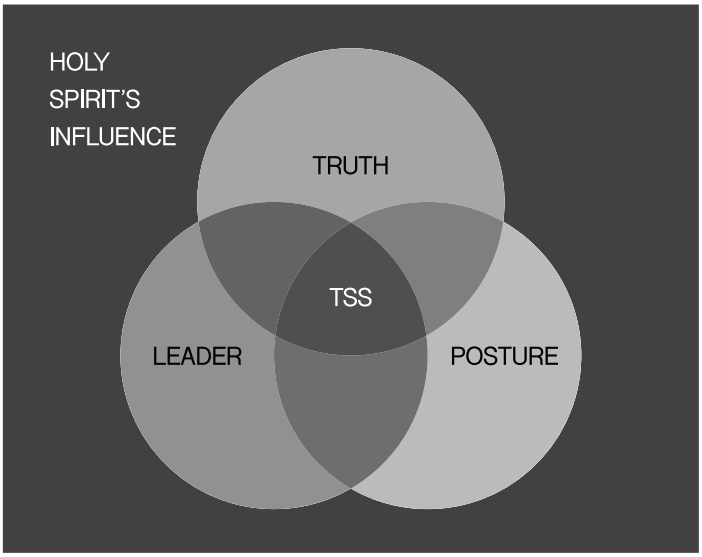
If it hasn't been said yet, let me be clear. Discipleship and spiritual maturity don't happen in just nine simple sessions. Spiritual growth is a result of the Holy Spirit's interaction in a person's life. As a church we can help facilitate that process through this material. But, we cannot force it to happen or make it happen on our schedule. So, what factors help spiritual growth occur?

Just as a tennis racket has a sweet spot where the ball flies best off the strings, there is a sweet spot in spiritual growth and discipleship. People grow the most when the factors line up in this sweet spot. It is a combination of Truth (God's Word), Loving Leaders/Mentors (The Right Person) and an individual's Posture (Receptivity/Good Soil). No transformation happens apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit causes an alignment between God's Truth (His Word), A Person's Receptivity (Posture) and the Right Person (Leader). The combination of these three factors is the Transformational Sweet Spot (The TSS) and is optimal for spiritual growth.[2]

Spiritual growth is a result of the Holy Spirit's interaction in a person's life.

Think about your own life and the times of your greatest growth. What was your mindset when this growth occurred? Maybe it was during a time of trial, weakness or difficulty. Some of our greatest growth "opportunities" are when difficulties hit. Perhaps your growth was during a time when you were in a particularly open posture, receptive, humble and looking for growth and change. This is good soil and cannot be manufactured. Did your growth happen through a person or a leader? Did the right person challenge you? Did someone reach out and lead you through something? Or was someone there for you during a difficult time? God uses the right leaders, in the right situations equipped with His truth.

Did your growth happen in the context of receiving truth in some way. For example was it through a Bible study or training through some spiritual disciplines?



TSS (Transformational Sweet Spot)

Think of a period in your life when you experienced the greatest spiritual growth. Do you see the factors in the above diagram present in your own experience? *Describe your experience in the space below.*

2 Peter 1:20-21
Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

God's Word - The Bible

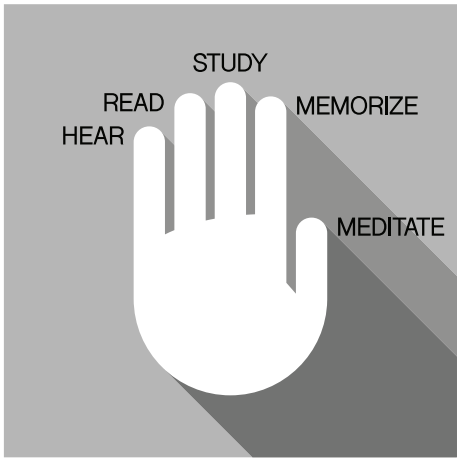
The Bible is the most remarkable book ever written. About forty men of many occupations wrote the Bible over approximately 1,500 years. It was written in three languages Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Yet the Bible has one great theme and central figure, Jesus Christ. All of this would be impossible unless the Bible had one supreme Author, and it did, the Holy Spirit. *Read 2 Peter 1:20-21 to understand how God's Word came to us.*

Getting a Grip on God's Word

In today's culture there is a significant lack of knowledge when it comes to God's Word. Have you noticed? If you have a desire to get a good grip on the Scripture, let me suggest the five-finger method.[3]

Five-Finger Method:

- **Pinkie Finger**
  - *Hear the Word*
- **Ring Finger**
  - *Read the Word*
- **Middle Finger**
  - *Study the Word*
- **Pointer Finger**
  - *Memorize the Word*
- **Thumb**
  - *Meditate on the Word*



If you try to hold your Bible with one finger, you won't have much luck. With two fingers it will still be difficult. With three fingers it gets easier, but the best grip is with all five fingers. The same is true for your grip on the Word of God.

In the space below, share ways in which you are getting a grip on God's Word.

Beginning a Quiet Time Or Devotional Life

When it comes to having regular time in God's Word, it really isn't complicated. The main thing is to simply do something. Here is a good example of how to get started:

Pick a Place/Time Pick a specific place and time. The more routine you can make your quiet time the better. Your place should be free from distractions. Eventually your place will become very comfortable to you. Using an electronic calendar can help remind you of your quiet time. Start with 15 minutes.

Format Decide how you will structure your quiet time. I suggest you read Scripture and spend time in prayer. Begin your time in His Word by choosing a heading or a book of the Bible. You can plan to spend about six minutes reading the Bible, three minutes talking to God, two minutes considering how God might want you to apply what you read and four minutes writing down your summary. This format is not so you will be mechanical or punch a clock, but rather to provide structure.

Application Consider how God may be asking you to respond to your time with Him. For instance, is there some way He may want you to apply the Scripture you read? An application can be something "to know," "to do," or a way "to be." With that understanding you can receive an application from basically any passage of Scripture. Ask what God is wanting you to specifically know, do, or become.

Write It Down Consider writing down what you are learning from your quiet time. A simple way to do this is with a journal-size notebook or electronically in a Word document. First, write the date and the passage reference you read. Next, write a brief summary of what you read in your own words. Then write out your simple application. Writing it down will ensure you retain what you are experiencing.

Modern Bible Study Resources

You might find it helpful to become familiar with some online or downloadable software apps for Bible study, Bible reading or devotionals. There are numerous good, free resources including the few listed below:

- Bible Gateway App
- YouVersion App
- E-Sword (Download or App)
- Blue Letter Bible App
- Olive Tree Bible App

Experiencing a Quiet Time

There are five days of "homework" outlined in the section below. The goal is to give you a taste of having a regular quiet time or devotional life and to work through John Chapter 1. Give it a try.

Daily Format:

Use the following format each day with the passages indicated below.

1. Begin with prayer. Ask God to forgive your sins and to speak to you during your time in the Word.
2. Read the passage for comprehension. You may need to read the entire passage twice.
3. Summarize the passage in writing.
4. Write down an application: something to know, to do, or a way to be.
5. Close in prayer.

   DAY 1: Read John 1:1-18

   DAY 2: Read John 1:19-28

   DAY 3: Read John 1:29-34

   DAY 4: Read John 1:35-42

   DAY 5: Read John 1:43-51

Next Steps

- *Do the Five Daily Quiet Times outlined in this session.*
- *Download and learn about the various Bible Apps mentioned.*
- *Memorize the two Scripture Memory verses for this session.*

Scripture Memory

Joshua 1:8
Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

2 Timothy 3:16
All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..

Questions for Discussion

1. Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share about a period in your life when you experienced the greatest spiritual growth.

2. As people shared about when they experienced spiritual growth, what factors in the TSS (Transformational Sweet Spot) diagram did you notice?

3. As you listened to today's session, what stood out to you as most interesting or helpful?

4. What attitude helps you personally respond to God's Word and grow?

Questions for Discussion (continued)

5. Read Joshua 1:8 and 2 Timothy 3:16. In your opinion, what make the Bible such a remarkable book?

6. How do you know you can trust the Bible? What gives you that confidence?

7. What are some of the practical disciplines related to the Bible that you have experienced? What has made the greatest impact on your life? Why?

8. *Begin having a quiet time. Memorize the two Scripture Memory verses for this session. Close your time with prayer.*

Scripture Memory

Joshua 1:8
Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

2 Timothy 3:16
All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness..

NOTES:

SESSION 5

Serve - Service Evangelism

Service Through the Lens of the Gospel

Spiritual growth is often considered to be the personal or private work of the believer. However, much of what we do in the Christian life is in front of others. It is especially true when we engage in God's mission. Serving people, especially those who have nothing to give in return, requires growth on our part.

Serving people, especially those who have nothing to give in return, requires growth on our part.

Service is not our natural inclination; self-preservation is. Going public with your faith tests your commitment. As a discipline, service gives room for us to develop in our character. With the mission of God as our focus, transformation of our heart occurs as we experience God's work in us. It is through serving that we discover our God-given gifts. Service grows our love and refines our view of God's work.

We need to reflect on the Macedonian call given to Paul in Acts 16:9, "Cross over to Macedonia and help us." When Paul arrived in Macedonia, he gave them the gospel. Certainly social needs were present in Macedonia. We know from biblical and historical records that injustice was common. Poverty was rampant. Political oppression was a normal occurrence. Widows and orphans were powerless and needed an advocate. But Paul did not address those needs. Instead, his service to the Macedonians was to give them the gospel first. The gospel lens is the truth through which Paul saw all of life. Through his service to the lost and his ministry to the saved, the gospel was always the priority.[1]

Acts 16:9
During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

1 Corinthians 15:1-5
Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve.

The Gospel is Good News

The word gospel literally means "good news." The gospel is the good news that we may freely receive God's righteousness and forgiveness because Jesus suffered and died in our place for our sin. Paul says that it is essential for both justification and sanctification. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, the gospel is clearly defined; Christ died for our sins. He truly died physically. As a matter of fact, He not only died and was buried, but also raised from the dead. The great news is that He allowed us to join Him in eternal life.

Paul describes the gospel message as being God's power.

> **Romans 1:16-17** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written: "The righteous shall live by faith."

Because God is righteous, He demands righteousness. Without perfection and holiness, we are unable to be with Him and unable to receive eternal life. Because of our sin, we are incapable of making ourselves worthy to approach Him. On account of God's grace, through the sacrifice of Jesus, He freely gives righteousness to all who repent and trust in Him. Our righteous God gave His righteousness in exchange for the sinfulness of sinful people. Martin Luther described this as "a blessed exchange," our sin in exchange for Christ's righteousness.[2]

1 Corinthians 15:6-8
After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

Psalm 32 is an Old Testament celebration of the Great Exchange

> **Psalm 32:1-5** Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

The importance of this "blessed exchange" cannot be overstated. Meditating on the reality of what Jesus has done for us and the exchange that we have personally received is foundational for all transformational discipleship.

How did you receive the "blessed exchange"? What is your story? What transpired in your life for you to recognize your sin and understand the good news?

Serving People in 5 Steps of Outreach

As we become fully devoted followers of Christ, our attitudes and actions should reflect His love and compassion toward others. In Luke 15, Jesus spoke through parables about the importance of reaching one lost soul. Throughout Jesus' ministry it is evident that He didn't let social or cultural boundaries prevent Him from reaching out to anyone. In His own words, He "came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

Each of us has people we can influence in our life, and it is no accident that we have the relationships that we do. God might be prompting you to reach out to someone in your sphere of influence. Stop for a moment, pray and consider who that might be. Then follow the practical steps listed on the next page.

1. Spend time with people at work or in your neighborhood.
2. Listen to them so you can get to know them and recognize their needs.
3. Pray for their needs as they are revealed in your talks.
4. Serve them by meeting one of the needs they shared.
5. Share your story with them when God clearly gives you the opportunity.

Who are the lost souls that God has placed in your life? Write the names of people in your sphere of influence to whom God may want you to share the good news.

Everyone Has a Story

There is a famous movie about the life of Christ entitled, 'The Greatest Story Ever Told'! God loves a good story and likes to have it told over and over. You too have a story to tell. When God comes into your life you will never be the same again. Your life story is changed forever. Being able to briefly tell your unique life story and how you came to trust in Christ as your personal Savior is very valuable. The Apostle Peter encouraged us this way:

> **1 Peter 3:15** But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Sharing your faith story is both a privilege and a serious responsibility. Your story may help someone begin to understand the gospel.

How to Write Your Story

These guidelines will help you develop a brief explanation of your life BEFORE you received Christ, the simple explanation of HOW you received Christ, and realistically what your life has been like AFTER you received Christ.

Remember you want people to hear and understand your story. Therefore, you will want to avoid using words others would not understand. Make your story brief, about three to four minutes. Keep it real. Your story may be the first authentic encounter they have ever had with a Christian.

Your story should clearly express the good news and how to respond to it. Your goal should be to share your story and inspire listeners to invite Christ to be their Savior. If you received Christ as a child and do not remember details, then put the emphasis on your life after being saved. Remember, knowing when Christ came into your life is not as important as knowing He is in your life. Use this simple outline to write your brief testimony in the spaces provided below:

BEFORE I received Christ...

Try to remember the things you felt were wrong in your life before you became a Christian. Give your first sentence a hook. Make it interesting.

HOW I received Christ...

Be very specific, yet not wordy. How did you decide to follow Jesus? What things happened in your life that caused you to discover Jesus and commit your life to Him?

AFTER I received Christ...

Be honest. Being saved doesn't mean you are perfect. What are the benefits of being a Christian? How is your life being changed by Jesus?

Here are some questions to evaluate your story. Can you share it within three to four minutes? Does it relate to a wide variety of people and personalities? Is it personal and not preachy? Does it have an interesting hook or beginning? Is Christ kept central in my story? Is the gospel clearly expressed for someone to receive salvation?

Next Steps

- *Write out your testimony and practice sharing your story.*
- *Continue working on having a regular quiet time/devotional life.*
- *Memorize the two Scripture Memory verses for this session.*

Scripture Memory

Romans 6:23
For the wages
of sin is death, but
the gift of God is
eternal life in Christ
Jesus our Lord

John 1:12
Yet to all who
did receive him,
to those who
believed in his name,
He gave the right to
become children of
God....

Questions for Discussion

1. Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share the circumstances that surrounded your coming to faith in Christ. Do not share your full testimony, just a quick statement of how it happened for you.

Acts 4:20
As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.

2. When you think about sharing Christ, how do you react? How do you think Peter would have answered this question? Read Acts 4:20.

1 John 1:13
We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ

3. What did you find most interesting or helpful in this session?

4. Read 1 John 1:3. Sometimes you may feel as though you "need to know all the answers" before you can be an effective witness for Christ. What is it that we really need to know?

Questions for Discussion (continued)

5. Read 1 Peter 3:15, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5 and John 9:25. List some observations about evangelism from these passages.

6. What was your reaction to the 5 Steps of Outreach? What do you see as a barrier or difficulty to overcome in carrying out this outreach plan?

7. *Write your testimony. Memorize the two Scripture Memory verses for this session on page 47. Close your time with prayer.*

NOTES:

SESSION 6

Pray - Alignment with God

"...we align ourselves with what God is doing. We don't align God with what we are doing."

Prayer Is Aligning Ourselves with God

The fourth behavior of a disciple is to pray. Prayer is the greatest ministry of discipleship; it involves purpose, practice, and power. In our church, we believe in the power of prayer and in the God who answers. When we pray, we are inviting God's kingdom into all areas of our lives. Prayer is twofold: our part is to faithfully pray and believe in the One to whom we are praying; God's part is to answer.

Picture the image of a man adrift in a boat. Finding a rope and a hook, he throws it to the shore to secure it. As he pulls on the rope, is he pulling the shore to his boat or his boat to the shore? Obviously, the latter. Prayer works in the same fashion. Prayer is a tool by which we align ourselves with what God is doing. We don't align God with what we are doing.[1]

> **John 15:7** If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.

As we align ourselves with God, it is okay to bring our needs and our desires to Him. Charles Spurgeon said, "Asking is the rule of the kingdom."[2] Making the proper petitions is a natural outcome of a believer who is relationally intimate with Christ and investing in His Word, as described in John 15:7. God expects His people will make requests of Him for life's needs. As God answers our prayers, sometimes in ways we don't expect, we become aligned with Him in His will for our lives. This is the work of prayer, and it is critical for transformational spiritual growth.

Four Elements of Prayer

These elements can be remembered by the acrostic ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication.

Adoration - *Praise for who God is.*

> **Hebrews 13:5** Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.
>
> **Psalm 40:5** Many, O LORD my God, are the wonders you have done. The things you planned for us no one can recount to you; were I to speak and tell of them, they would be too many to declare.

Confession - *Admitting our sins to God.*

> **Psalm 38:18** For I confess my iniquity; I am full of anxiety because of my sin.

Thanksgiving - *Thanking Him for what He has done.*

> **Ephesians 5:20** Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.

Supplication - *Prayer for others and ourselves.*

> **James 1:5** But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Jesus Teaching Prayer

In Matthew 6 we have a glimpse of Jesus teaching His disciples to pray. Try to find the elements of prayer from the previous page in the prayer below.

> **Matthew 6:9-13** Pray, then, in this way: 'Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen'.

Indicate below the aspects of prayer (ACTS) you find in Christ's model.

Practical Ideas to Consider Related to Prayer

Prayer should be organic, natural, consistent and relational. Here are some helpful thoughts about prayer:

1 Thessalonians 5:17
Pray continually...

1. **Pray Without Ceasing** (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
   Many feel guilty that they don't pray or don't feel like they have time to pray. Some people are more naturally inclined to action and movement and the idea of sitting and praying is suffocating. For those who are more action oriented, be encouraged by this verse that only contains three words, "pray without ceasing." That means that prayer does not have to be something you do while you sit still. You can consider God throughout your day, include Him in your thoughts, and express things to Him moment by moment. *List below some specific ways that you can apply this verse in your life.*

2. **Silence in Prayer**
   The proper stance when it comes to transformation is sometimes less action and more quiet. Although this is difficult for some, read Ecclesiastes 5:1-7 for insight on this discipline that might help bring forth more silence in your prayer time.

   How can ceasing our chatter and sitting in God's presence make a difference in your life? *Write your answer in the space below.*

3. Pray During Your Quiet Time

In a previous session we encouraged the discipline of a "quiet time" or "devotional time." This is a time set aside for your relationship with the Lord. It is primarily composed of reading God's Word, praying, listening, and considering how God wants you to apply His Word to your life.

A practical idea is to infuse the elements of prayer, Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication (ACTS) into your time with the Lord. Begin your quiet time with Adoration. Start by expressing your belief in who God is, expressing His worth and greatness and placing Him over your life. Then you can move into a time of Confession, asking forgiveness for falling short of God's righteousness.

At this point, you are cleansed and in a proper Lordship position to hear from Him while reading His Word. After you read, you can spend more time in prayer, thanking Him for His provisions and insights. Then you can ask for things that seem appropriate as you try to align your life to God. This is the Supplication portion of your time with the Lord.

4. Use a Prayer List

A prayer list can help you remember things you might otherwise forget to pray over. During the Supplication portion of your quiet time, pull out your prayer list to help guide you. It can include:

- Your family
- Your non-Christian friends
- Your pastor and church
- Missionaries and Christian workers

Leave space by the requests to write how God answers these prayers. This can be so encouraging over the years as you look back and see God's faithfulness.

Prayer should have an outward focus with a desire to align with God to accomplish a purpose here in this world.

5. Pray for People who Live in Your Zip Code

Prayer should have an outward focus with a desire to align with God to accomplish a purpose here in this world. This work could be to help transform your zip code or sphere of influence. Pray for the areas around you asking God to work in your neighbors, relationships, local business, shopping centers, grocery stores, restaurants, schools, work and work relationships. All of this represents your sphere of influence and you should enlist God's help in transforming people into fully devoted followers of Christ. This takes prayer. When you pray in this way, then your interactions with people become so much more meaningful and important. They become part of God's will to accomplish His larger plan.

6. Prayer Walk

For those who dislike sitting still while praying, I encourage you to prayer walk. Walk your neighborhood or business area and pray. Pray for influence, success and God's transforming power to impact this area according to His will. Ask God to use you in this process.

7. Pray in Groups

Praying together in a small group or Bible study can be a powerful experience uniting a team to God's purposes. Matthew 18:20 states:

> **Matthew 18:20** For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them.

Praying in groups can help you experience God's presence in this unique way.

Ephesians 5:31-32
"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery–but I am talking about Christ and the church.

8. Pray with Your Spouse

Praying together regularly with your spouse is a wonderful idea. In Ephesians 5:31-32, it is described as a "profound mystery" to be united with your spouse in marriage. This mystery is spiritual in nature and your marriage should share a spiritual component and connection. In my opinion as a marriage counselor, I believe the most important advice for the Christian couple, above all other self-help suggestions, is to pray together. Many have found this practical and doable as a part of their routine at the end of the day when one or both spouses are heading to bed. This moment of connection to share may only take a few minutes, but it can be the most important few minutes of your day. For couples who travel, this can be done over the phone. If you haven't prayed together in a regular and consistent way, consider this to enhance your spiritual life and your marriage.

Scripture Memory

John 15:7
If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Philippians 4:6-7
Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Next Steps

- *Do the Five Daily Quiet Times outlined in this session.*
- *Download and learn about the various Bible Apps mentioned.*
- *Integrate a prayer list into your quiet time/devotional life.*
- *Take a suggestion or two from our list and apply them to your life.*
- *Memorize the two Scripture Memory verses for this session.*

Questions for Discussion

1. Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share where you would go on your dream vacation if you could choose anywhere in the world.

2. What did you find most interesting or helpful in this session?

3. Have you had experience with any of the practical suggestions? From your personal experience, what can you say to encourage your group as to how the suggestions have been helpful?

Questions for Discussion (continued)

4. Read Hebrews 4:16, Psalm 62:8 and Philippians 4:6-7. What do you learn about prayer from the verses on this page?

Hebrews 4:16
Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Psalm 62:8
Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us

Philippians 4:6-7
Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

5. Practice integrating prayer and these specific suggestions into your life and faith practices.

   Memorize the two Scripture Memory verses on page 57.

6. This week we want each group to experience a prayer walk. Are there any specific prayer requests that need to be shared prior to the prayer walk? Once prayer requests are shared, *decide where you are going to walk. As you end your time together continue walking as you close in prayer.*

NOTES:

SESSION 7

Give - Time, Talents and Treasures

John 3:16
For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

We Serve A Generous God

The fifth, and possibly most difficult, behavior of a disciple is to give. In our desire to be more like our heavenly father, we have to grow in generosity. No one can out give God! The apostle John reminds us in John 3:16 that because of God's great love for us, He gave His only son. And that son, Jesus, who is the exact representation of God's nature, came giving and serving even to the point of death.

> **John 13:14-15** If I then, Your Lord and teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

Jesus' desire to seek and save the lost overshadowed His desire for status, wealth, position or authority. To determine His priorities, He viewed life and the world through the lens of the gospel. Paul also encouraged believers to consider Jesus's example as it relates to your finances and other priorities.

> **2 Corinthians 8:7-9** But as you excel in everything–in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you–see that you excel in this act of grace also. I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

We have a lavish God who desires for us to be like Him in generosity with our time, talents, and treasures. As we internalize the significance of the gospel and consider that Christ became poor so that we could be rich eternally, our generosity will continue to grow.

Finance and Identity

Before we discuss giving and finances, it is imperative to take a moment to remember our identity and what defines us as people. It would be easy and misleading to summarize our worth and assume that God looks at us through an accountant's lens. He does not, and we should not view our worth in this way either.

How we view ourselves is incredibly important. Educator Jane Elliot conducted a now, well known learning exercise in her class of all white elementary students.[1] She declared that research had determined that blue-eyed students were smarter than the brown-eyed students. She moved the blue-eyed students to the front of the class. She gave them extra time at recess and extra privileges. The brown-eyed students were given collars to wear so that everyone would know of their inferiority. The next week, she announced to the class that she was mistaken. It was actually the brown-eyed students who were superior to the blue-eyed students and the special treatment was reversed.

This experiment revealed that the students lived out of their declared identity. On the days when students wore the collars as symbols of their inferiority, they described feelings of sadness and their academic performance was negatively affected. For example, when students of either eye color wore the collars, they needed additional time to complete a reading exercise. When the students were declared to be the smartest students and free from the dreaded collars, they were filled with confidence and completed the reading exercise quickly. The individuals understanding of their identity impacted how they lived.

Peter reminds us of who we are in 1 Peter 2:

> **1 Peter 2:9-12** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

In just a few sentences, Peter declares that we are chosen, priests, holy, God's possession and strangers in this world. [2]Whether you are in the financial category of the "haves" or the "have nots," in Christ we are all the same. We are children of the King and aliens in this world. We are brothers and sisters who love one another because God is our loving Father. Since we are His children, God desires for us to reflect His nature through our generosity in giving. Can someone tell you are a follower of Christ by looking at the way you spend your money? By remembering who we are in Christ, focusing on the truth that He loves and accepts us just the way we are, we can keep growing into maturity.

"Since we are His children, God desires for us to reflect His nature through our generosity in giving."

What The Bible Teaches About Giving

Giving is certainly about more than just dollars and cents, but it includes our money. The Scriptures specifically describe a "tithe" as a material testimony of God's ownership of the material and spiritual things of our lives. The tithe is first mentioned in Genesis 14. On his return from the daring rescue of Lot from four enemy kings, Abraham encountered the priest Melchizedek and voluntarily surrendered to him a tithe (one-tenth) of everything he had.

In Hebrew, "tithe" literally means "tenth," and it appears 30 times throughout the Old and New Testament. In Matthew 23:23 Jesus

Matthew 23:23
"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others."

condemns the religious leaders for only tithing. He makes it clear they should not only be tithing, but also attending to even more important matters–justice, mercy and faithfulness.

Tithing does not make up for a life that is not following God. Tithing is biblically understood as a proper baseline for determining financial Lordship. Additionally, we should generously share our time and gifts (which are all from the Lord). God is the owner of all things, and we are His stewards; giving back a portion to Him is demonstrating proper Lordship.

Our Attitude Toward Giving

Our time and our tithe should be given bountifully and cheerfully. Giving is not about getting money out of our wallets; it is about getting greed out of our hearts.

> **2 Corinthians 9:6-7** The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Your tithe is a physical way to signify the recognition of God's ownership in your life and heart. Tithing with proper motives invokes God's blessings:

> **Malachi 3:10-12** "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "And see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the fines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the Lord Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty.

Financial Freedom: 80-10-10 Lifestyle

At Crossroads, we believe in living an 80-10-10 Lifestyle for balanced financial stewardship[3]. The 80-10-10 Lifestyle is a simple plan that can save a lot of heartache and debt.

- We LIVE on 80% of our income.
- We SAVE 10% of our income.
- We GIVE 10% of our income.

LIVE– Living expenses include all of your household expenses, entertainment and lifestyle choices. It also includes larger purchases, which you have to plan and save for over time, like automobiles, college, weddings, etc.

SAVE– Saving includes your emergency fund, 3-6 months of savings in case of job loss and retirement and investments.

GIVE– Giving is your tithe to the Church and Kingdom work.

Start Where You Are

Understand that the plan we are teaching is a biblical ideal. If you are unemployed or have some catastrophic family issue, do not feel pressured to give–take care of your family. If you are not facing a significant hardship, strive to be mature and trust God in this area. You have to begin where you are and take positive baby steps toward becoming financially free.

To gain specific training, help and support in the area of finances, the church offers several classes to help you work toward financial freedom. The basic financial maturity steps to work through are[4]:

- Step 1: Live on a Budget (80-10-10)
- Step 2: Save an Emergency Fund ($1,000)
- Step 3: Pay off Consumer Debt
- Step 4: Save 3 to 6 months of Living Expenses
- Step 5: Build Wealth

We are all a work in progress. None are perfect. Start where you are, set goals, and work toward bringing your life into conformity with the Lord's will and wise principles. Don't spend time and energy debating what God has said about giving. Your time will be much better spent focusing on the next personal step that you need to achieve. Know that your church wants to help you, and all of us, become financially free. As we become financially free, God will be able to use His Church as an amazing instrument of blessing in this world. For private reflection, take a moment and think through where you and your family are on the steps outlined above. *What would be a wise next step in your life financially?*

Giving of Your Entire Life Time and Talents

Giving should include our wallets and our budgets, but it shouldn't stop there. Giving includes having a generous attitude with our time and our talents. To become like Jesus in the area of giving, we must use our time and abilities to make a difference in the lives of others. We must view the world and our time through the lens of the gospel. How are you gifted to help others? What can God use in your life to make a difference for His Kingdom? *In the space below write where you give of yourself, or where you want to give your time and talents.*

Scripture Memory

Romans 12:2
Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

2 Corinthians 9:6-7
The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Next Steps

- *Develop a personal budget and be sure to include tithing and saving.*
- *Consider how you give your time and talents, and determine if there are any changes needed in this area of generosity.*
- *Memorize the two Scripture Memory verses for this session.*

Questions for Discussion

1. Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and share your favorite breakfast meal.

2. What did you find the most interesting or helpful in this session?

3. How do your finances affect your identity? How can you identify yourself without the "accountant's lens"?

Romans 12:2
Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

4. Read Romans 12:2 and discuss: When it comes to a transformed life and spiritual growth, how important is giving? Why is giving an important area to talk about?

Questions for Discussion (continued)

5. In what ways have you been impacted by generosity?

6. Share a story about how God was faithful financially during a time of need. What was your experience?

2 Corinthians 9:6-7
The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

7. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 and discuss. What makes a person a generous and cheerful giver? Is it determined by how much they have?

8. What is your big take away from today's session?

9. *Memorize the two Scripture Memory verses for this session and consider proper applications in your life related to your time, talents and treasures. Share any prayer requests and close your time with prayer.*

NOTES:

SESSION 8

Empowered to "Go"

Empowerment by The Holy Spirit

Although a toaster possesses all the ability it needs to do what it was created to do, it has no power on its own. A toaster can never toast your bread unless it is plugged into an outlet. Similarly, because you are a new creation in Christ, you have all the capacity you need to live the Christian life. However, you must continually draw from the proper source of power. A transformation takes place when you surrender control to Jesus as Savior and Lord. This change is more than a standard of performance or code of ethics; it is a vital personal relationship with a loving God. Jesus describes this transformation in John 7.

> **John 7:37-39** .On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

An abundant and overflowing life is the result of a growing relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Paul likens the Holy Spirit's work in our lives to producing the fruit of character.

> **Galatians 5:22-25** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Just as our relationship with God depends totally on what God has done through Jesus Christ, so the power to live a dynamic Christian life also comes totally from God through the Holy Spirit.

> **Acts 1:8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Matthew 28: 19-20
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always, to the end of the age."

So, having the Holy Spirit is having everything we need to "Go" and accomplish His Great Commission described in Matthew 28:19-20.

What does the Holy Spirit equip you to do? Why do you think the Holy Spirit's power is needed to be His witness? *Record your thoughts in the space below.*

Sin's Distracting Work

Although you became a Christian through the Holy Spirit's work, sin can easily distract and interrupt your fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Sin's influence can cause you to slowly drift away from the firm

foundation of Christ. Soon, you will find yourself relying on your own strength instead of Christ's. If you discover that sin or disobedience has caused you to retake control of your life, it's important to recognize your sin before God, repent and surrender control back to Christ. Even when you can't see the way, trust in His direction

> **1 John 1:9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

From Unable to Empowered

Do you wonder if God can really use you to help other people grow spiritually? The disciples had similar doubts and needed this encouragement from Paul.

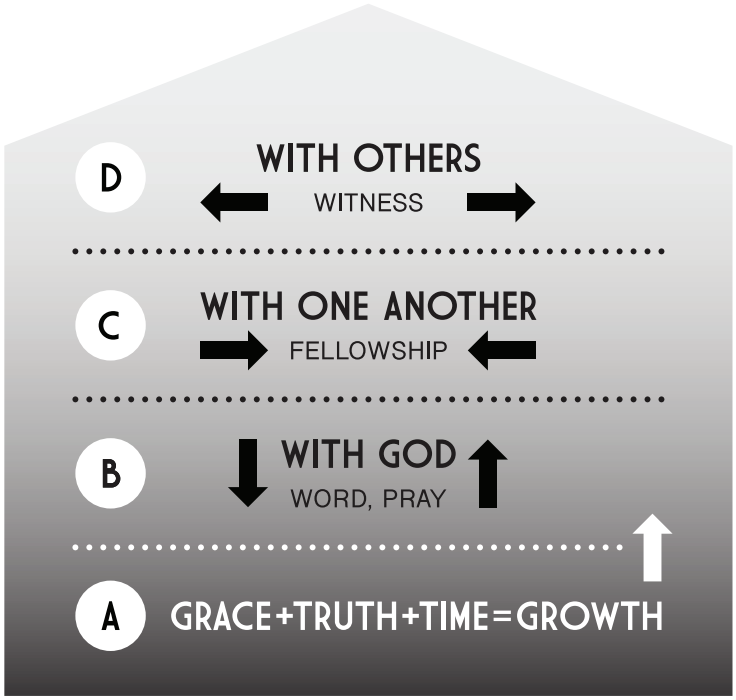
> **Ephesians 3:14-21** For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith–that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

God has plans for you. As you allow, He will use you in ways that you can't begin to imagine. Lean on the Holy Spirit and be empowered by Him.

God's Plan for Your Ministry

As you consider how God may plan to use you to encourage spiritual growth in the lives of others, it helps to understand how growth occurs. The picture below describes the dynamics.

Growth Environment - How People Grow



A. There are two primary ingredients God uses to cause growth in our lives: Grace and Truth. Truth gives us the understanding we need to live the Christian life. Grace provides the acceptance and encouragement we need to keep on going. But growth doesn't happen all at once. It occurs as a process over time. Thus, the formula for an ideal growth environment is:

Grace + Truth + Time = Growth

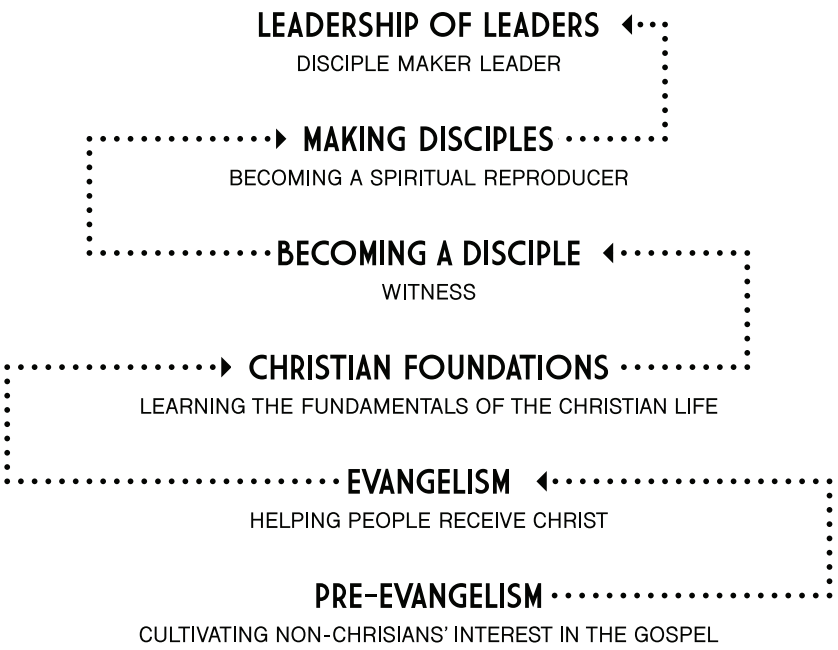
B. Section B describes the upward relationship with God and is experienced through His Word and Prayer.

C. Section C recognizes that inward relationships are with each other (believers) and are experienced in fellowship. Like the new believers in Acts, we experience "Grace + Truth + Time" in the context of relationships.

D. Section D reflects the outward relationships we have with those who do not believe in Christ. Our influence with them is through our witness for Christ and Evangelism.

The following diagram is an example of the process a person goes through from his first exposure to the gospel to becoming a leader of spiritual multipliers. It is not meant to represent the only way a person develops spiritually. Rather, it is an effective progression through which a person can develop on his or her journey to become a spiritual leader

The Stages of the Discipleship Process[2]



The purpose of Equip Discipleship Training is to help you become a disciple and teach you how to reproduce yourself spiritually or make disciples.

A Disciple Is:

- A Follower of Christ
- Someone who has received Christ and is Connecting, Growing, Serving, Praying and Giving.
- A person living in a Christ-Centered way, not perfect, but has a proper posture toward the Lord.
- Someone interested in influencing others to also become followers of Christ.

Are you a disciple? If so, have you developed your ministry? Where does your ministry fit on the diagram on page 75? Are you more interested in evangelism and working with those who don't know Christ? Are you more interested in training those who know Christ? Is your ministry more in personal 1:1 relationships, or in a group leader role? Is your ministry with a certain age group, or demographic? Where will God place you in His work? *Write your thoughts in response in the space below.*

Your Gifting for Ministry

As you determine your ministry, it is helpful to know more about how you are gifted as an individual and as a leader. God has given each believer spiritual gifts. Every Christian is a minister with a unique contribution to make in the body of Christ. The central thrust of your ministry depends on the spiritual gifts you have received.

> **1 Corinthians 12:7** To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
>
> **1 Peter 4:10** As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

Spiritual gifts are not limited to a subgroup of believers, they are distributed by the Spirit to all believers. The following list covers some of the most common spiritual gifts (but is not an exhaustive list of all the gifts of the Spirit):

- ☐ Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
- ☐ Teaching (Matthew 28:19)
- ☐ Faith (2 Corinthians 5:7)
- ☐ Giving (2 Corinthians 9:7)
- ☐ Discernment (1 John 4:1)
- ☐ Exhortation (Hebrews 3:13; 10:25)
- ☐ Knowledge (2 Peter 3:18)
- ☐ Mercy (Ephesians 4:32)
- ☐ Service (Galatians 5:13)
- ☐ Wisdom (James 1:5)

Based on your knowledge of yourself, place a check in the box next to the two or three primary spiritual gifts that you believe you may have. These gifts are often validated by others and by your ministry experience. You can take an online spiritual gifts inventory at either of these sites:

- https://spiritualgiftstest.com/spiritual-gifts-test-adult-version/
- https://uniquelyyou.org/

Not only are you gifted with a spiritual gift, but your life experience and your passions can help guide you toward ministry as well. What life experience or passions do you have that might be a factor in selecting a ministry? *Respond to this question in the space below.*

Your Life and Example

When ministering to others, the personal example you set is the most important quality you possess for ensuring success or failure. What kind of life do you lead? Your character and a Christ-centered lifestyle are critical for effectiveness. Obviously, you do not have to be perfect and lead a life free from struggles. Actually, an authentic life that demonstrates faithfulness in God through struggles is fertile ground for spiritual growth and opportunities for effective ministry. People are inspired to change as they see you live for Christ in the midst of hardships. When others would choose to "curse God and die," as Job's wife recommended (Job 2:9), your faithfulness and hope in Christ shine brightly. So, use your life example, your character and your Christ-centered lifestyle for your ministry. Protect these, for they are your most important tool in effective ministry.

Job 2:9
His wife said to him, "Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!"

Scripture Memory

1 Peter 3:15
But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

Acts 1:8
But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth..

Allow God to Use You

Will you take the next step of ministry development? Will you allow God to use you and your life to influence others toward the basics of discipleship? For some, this will require a purposeful and intentional shift. Perhaps you will be able to infuse your current relationships with a purpose and boldly take the risk to become an influencer in the lives around you. Do you have a ministry?

Take a few minutes and prayerfully think about how God might use you to make disciples in the world around you. *In the space below, write your thoughts of how God might be leading you.*

Next Steps

- *If you are unsure about your spiritual gifts, take a spiritual gifts inventory online this week.*
- *Develop a plan for allowing God to use your life to influence others toward discipleship.*
- *Memorize the two Scripture Memory verses for this session.*

Questions for Discussion

1. Ice Breaker: Introduce yourself and answer the following question with the group. What is your favorite household chore? If you don't have a favorite what is your least favorite household chore? Why?

2. What did you find the most interesting or helpful in this session?

3. *Read Acts 1:8.* How important is the Holy Spirit in the work of preparing and empowering us for ministry? What is the danger of doing the work of ministry without the Holy Spirit?

4. Can you relate to the diagram about how people grow? Use this diagram to describe a time in your life when you experienced spiritual growth. How did you see the elements of Grace, Truth and Time at work?

Questions for Discussion (continued)

5. Have you ever done a spiritual gifts inventory? Do you think you possess some of the gifts listed in this chapter? Which of these gifts do you believe are in your top three?

6. As you think about your life and ministry, where do you see yourself on the Discipleship Process Diagram? Share with the group why you describe yourself at that stage on the diagram.

7. Do you feel like you already have a ministry that helps others become disciples? How would you describe this ministry? What next ministry steps do you see God cultivating in your life?

8. Memorize the two Scripture Memory verses for this session on page 79. Remember to use this material as you consider how God may want to use them in ministry. Share any prayer requests and close your time with prayer.

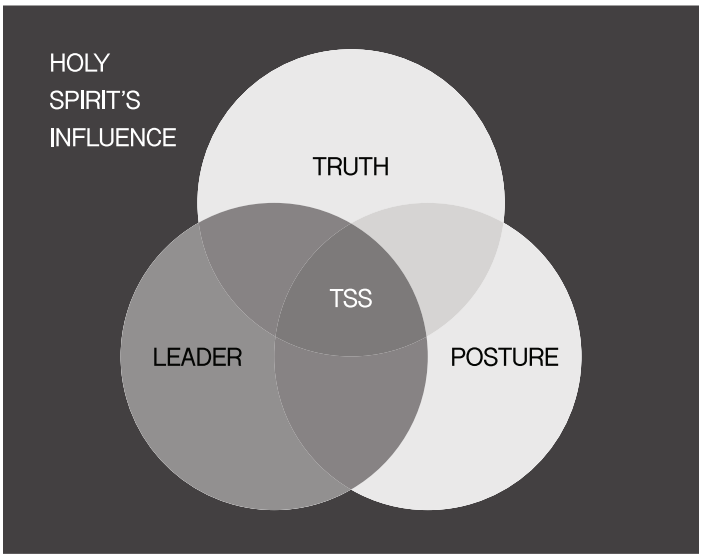
NOTES:

SESSION 9

Mobilized to "Go"

The Leaders God Uses

Through this material, we have seen the role that God's Word plays in discipleship. We have also learned that discipleship is most transformational when a person is in a good posture to receive the truth. The final key ingredient of discipleship is leadership. You may not consider yourself a "leader". You may think you are just being a good friend. But when "friends" point people toward truth while they are in an open posture, transformation happens. Friends like this are called "Leaders", and they are key in hitting the TSS-Transformational Sweet Spot.[1]



Without leadership, would-be disciples wander aimlessly with no sense of direction. Something amazing happens when leaders embrace their responsibility to help people apply the truth of God's Word. Jesus' leadership guided the original disciples into becoming disciple makers, and today God wants to use you to make disciples also.

Staying Healthy as a Leader

As exciting as it is to think about the ways God wants to use you, it is also important to evaluate your current level of health and stress. Healthy leadership contains a balance of Connecting, Growing, Serving, Praying and Giving. In your excitement, it's tempting to continually "add one more thing to your plate." Christian leaders often overload in the area of Connecting and Serving. So, as you evaluate how you can "make disciples," please don't add this new ministry on top of an already crazy schedule. God has commanded us to be a disciple and to make disciples, but doing that in a way that maintains your health, is critical. If you are unhealthy as a leader, you will not be able to minister and lead by the example you desire. My hope is that you will be inspired to incorporate this discipleship training in your existing relationships and ministries to help others grow and become disciples. A helpful example:

"It is possible to engage in the ministry of making disciples without making your life CRAZY."

> "A young adult invited two of her high school friends to read a book with her and then meet for a monthly lunch and talk. As they discussed the book, the young adult used her insights on discipleship to help her friends grow spiritually. She took time during one of their meetings to explain how to have a personal quiet time. One of the young ladies immediately went out, bought a Bible and notebook and began having a personal time with the Lord because of the influence of a "Leader." On the surface, this monthly lunch was just a friend meeting with friends. But because this young lady who was open to receiving influence heard the Truth of God's Word, transformation happened. Simple, right?"

So, how will becoming a disciple maker change and influence your schedule? It is possible to engage in the ministry of making disciples without making your life crazy. Perhaps you can invite two or three people to join you for a monthly lunch and read a book together that you've found impactful. You can apply the elements of discipleship you have learned and could teach them how to share their faith, how to grow in God's Word and how to live the life of a disciple. Not everyone you invite will be in a good posture for growth. Do not think that this is a failure on your part. Your job is to sow the seed, and God's job is to help people grow.

When you operate in your gifting and lifestyle, you can serve and disciple others in a balanced way. The goal is to accomplish the great commission over your lifetime, not with an intense plan that you can't sustain in a healthy way. What needs to change in your life in order to maintain proper health, balance and margin? *Write your thoughts in the space below.*

Launching Your Personal Ministry

To become an effective developer of others, you need to start at the beginning and learn certain basic personal ministry skills. This will enable you to minister to people as well as help them develop as spiritual leaders. It's important to cultivate the mindset of seeing each person you meet "with spiritual eyes" and evaluate their spiritual needs and interests.

Luke 5:1-5
One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

Jesus began His ministry on earth by ministering to the crowds. Through this, He made contact with individual men, some of whom He would specifically select later (Luke 4:38; 5:1-11). One by one, He called specific individuals to follow Him as He continued His public teaching. The following principles can be seen from Jesus' example of starting His ministry:[2]

1. Take the initiative to meet people and expand your sphere of influence.
2. Be willing to meet people's needs and help them take the next step spiritually.
3. Depend on the Holy Spirit to move in people's lives in special ways to increase their commitment. He will cause many to desire more spiritual growth. View these people as potential spiritual leaders.
4. Even after choosing people to develop, it is important to continue meeting new people and trusting God for ministry opportunities in which you can involve those whom you are discipling.

Who are some individuals in your direct sphere of influence, both Christians and non-Christians, that need your help spiritually right now?

Mindset of an Effective Leader

Investing in the spiritual life of another person is one of the most rewarding and challenging things you can do as a Christian. By helping people receive Christ, gain confidence in their relationship with God and understand Christian foundations, you will be preparing them to live for Christ for a lifetime. You will also have begun a life-long adventure of spiritual multiplication that will significantly affect many lives for years to come.

Luke 5:6-11

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break....they signaled their partners in the other boat to ... help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.
Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Developing spiritual leaders and reaching people for Christ is just wishful thinking unless the leader has a mindset that guides the process. This mindset affects how you perceive things and ultimately how you make decisions.[3]

DO::

- Think Relationally
- Think Big, Start Small
- Think Multiplication, Not Addition
- Think Transformation, Not Knowledge Impartation

DON'T::

- Forget to pray
- Lose sight of the objective "grow people spiritually/make disciples"
- Be weighed down by feelings of inadequacy
- Get discouraged with the challenge of people

Developing Your Ministry

God is calling you to a mission field. Maybe that mission field is within your zip code. Maybe it is in your workplace. Maybe it is in relationships you meet through church, or through school. There are people that God wants reached for Him. He is asking for available souls willing to be used to influence others. This can be done individually or in groups. As Jesus looked for His disciples, several qualities made them obvious choices:

The Disciples were FAT:

- Faithful
- Available
- Teachable

As you look for people to invite to join your group, or to invest in individually, look for those with the traits the disciples displayed. Individuals who are faithful, available and teachable are generally in a posture of openness to growth. Has God given you a ministry? Is there a pool of people that you can choose from to minister to in groups or individually? *In the space below, list the names of who comes to mind, or write a description of the ministry that you feel God is placing on your heart.*

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Where Do I Start?

Even after going through this training, getting started may still feel like a daunting task. This is where the Holy Spirit leads and guides you.

- Prayerfully ask the Lord to lead you up to three people.
- Invite each person to have an individual conversation with you. During that conversation, express your desire to invite them to pray about being part of a "Discipleship Group" you are starting.
- Do not water down the expectation. Here's an example: "This will be a group that meets at least once a month for a year. We will go through the Equip Discipleship Training together with the purpose of encouraging each other in our journey to become more like Jesus, His ways and His teachings. The hope and expectation is that , when we are finished with our group, you will then do the same for another new discipleship group."
- Ask them to respond by a certain date. Always follow up the conversation with an email and/or text message.

GO!

The Great Commission is not a suggestion or an option; it contains marching orders for all of us to build disciples.

> **Matthew 28:19-20** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Too often there are relatively few laborers to carry out the Great Commission because we have failed to follow the last part of the imperative, "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you…" We should build men and women with the same burning heart commitment to others that our Lord and His apostles demonstrated and make it organically part of the culture of our church.

Are you willing to "Go"? *Read 2 Timothy 2:2.* This is discipleship. It is worth the cost, it is worth the time and investment, and it is the hope of the world.

SO GO!

Questions for Discussion

1. Introduce yourself and share about an important milestone in your life. (For clarity, a milestone is a special accomplishment or achievement that made you proud).

2. What did you find most impactful about this course?

3. As you think about becoming a healthy leader, what do you believe needs to change in your life to maintain proper balance and margin?

4. Do you feel like God has given you a ministry at this point? Share with your group about the ministry that you feel God is placing on your heart.

Questions for Discussion (continued)

Matthew 28:19-20
Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

5. *Read Matthew 28:19-20* and share your observations.

6. As you think about the mindset of an effective leader, which do you think is the most important DO, and why? Which item on the DON'T list will you be most susceptible to?

   DO:

   - Think Relationally
   - Think Big, Start Small
   - Think Multiplication, Not Addition
   - Think Transformation, Not Knowledge Impartation

   DON'T:

   - Forget to pray
   - Lose sight of the objective to "grow people spiritually /make disciples"
   - Be weighed down by feelings of inadequacy
   - Get discouraged with the challenge of people

7. *Review the Scripture Memory Verses from the entire course and look for ways to begin your discipleship ministry. Share prayer requests and close your time in prayer.*

NOTES:

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