

How To Use This Study Guide

The Introductory material listed below is intended to help you catch a vision for what we mean by discipleship. The “How to Teach” article can guide you through the process of communicating what you’ve learned when you are asked to lead a group study.

Section	Article
<i>Introduction</i>	Discipleship: What’s Going On Here?
	How to Teach

Each study has three components: a main Bible passage to study, a brief article to read, and a page for reflection and application of what you’ve learned. You should also form a habit of jotting down questions as you do your study; these can help you spark your group’s discussion.

Section	Study #	Principle
<i>Our Relationship with God</i>	1	<i>Sin, our crippling disease</i>
	2	<i>Salvation, God’s great surprise</i>
	3	<i>The New You, our identity as believers</i>
	4	<i>The Ongoing Battle, why we still struggle</i>
	5	<i>How Do I Grow, developing a healthy diet</i>
<i>Our Relationship with One Another</i>	6	<i>Body Life 1: Belonging, life together in God’s family</i>
	7	<i>Body Life 2: Maturity, equipping the saints</i>
	8	<i>Spiritual Gifts 101, God loves diversity</i>
	9	<i>Spiritual Gifts 201, OK - so, what’s my gift?</i>
	10	<i>Loving One Another</i>
<i>Our Relationship with the World</i>	11	<i>Sojourners, this world is not my home</i>
	12	<i>Salt & Light, living a distinctive lifestyle</i>
	13	<i>The Great Commission, our spiritual job description</i>
	14	<i>Lifestyle Evangelism, looking for teachable moments</i>
	15	<i>Spiritual Warfare, the invisible battle</i>

SUGGESTED RESOURCES: We recommend that everyone in a discipleship group purchase or have access to the following – a recent translation of the Bible (New International or New American Standard), a Bible Dictionary (we recommend the Revell Bible Dictionary or New Bible Dictionary), a Concordance, and Larry Richard’s Expository Dictionary of Bible Words.

Discipleship: What's Going On Here?

The Purpose and Process of Growth in Christ

Discipleship is a word we throw around easily in Christian circles, but what does it mean? We may even be in a discipleship group without understanding the big picture. First of all, the word “disciple” means “learner”. This learning process begins when we come into a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ (this is what Paul means in Ephesians 4:20 when he says, *“But you did not learn Christ in this way...”*). That process is one in which God has fully invested Himself. He is absolutely committed to producing Christlikeness in His children: *“He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”* (Phil. 1:6). Greg Ogden (*“A Disciple’s Guide for today”*) describes it well:

“A disciple is one who responds in faith to the gracious call of Jesus Christ. Being a disciple is a lifelong process of dying to self while coming alive in Jesus Christ. Discipling is the process of intentional modeling whereby God uses us to exhort, correct, and build up disciples in order to produce maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to do the same unto a third generation.”

One of the great wonders of life is that Jesus includes human beings in His work. He has chosen us to bring the message of the gospel to the world, although He could have used angels (who never make mistakes!). Likewise, He allows us to participate in the growth of others. What a privilege! No wonder Paul remarked: *“Who is adequate for these things?...Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who has also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant...”*.

As ministers of the New Covenant, how do we encourage others toward the goal of Christlike maturity? This is best answered by yourself, as you study the method of the master-discipler, Jesus Himself, and His servants down through history. Always remember, however, that God will use you in a unique way, according to your gifts and circumstances. The message is the same for everyone, as are the basic principles, yet the pattern is as diverse as the creativity of God Himself.

“The careful, painstaking education for the disciples secured that the Teacher’s influence on the world should be permanent, that His kingdom should be founded on deep and indestructible convictions in the minds of a few, not on the shifting sands of superficial impressions on the minds of many.”

A.B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*

“His concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes but with men the multitudes would follow...One must decide where he wants his ministry to count - in the momentary applause of popular recognition or the reproduction of his life in a few chosen men who will carry on his work after he is gone.”

Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*

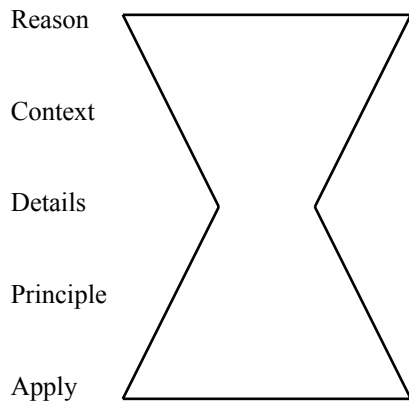
Project: Using the Scriptures below, write a brief (1-5 page) paper describing in your own words what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and how to help others along in that process.

*Luke 6:12-16, Mark 8:34-38, Colossians 1:28,29, Galatians 4:16,
2 Tim. 2:2, 2 Corinthians 4:16, 1 Thessalonians 1:6, Isaiah 50:4*

How to Teach

Living in a western culture, we have grown accustomed to thinking of teaching as *presenting information*. While this is not wrong, it can be incomplete. Jesus, for example, lived in an eastern culture, where teaching was thought of as *relating truth to life*. The rabbi, or teacher, was pictured with a band of disciples walking along a road, encountering various human situations, and relating truth to those real-life encounters. This should be our aim when we seek to teach the Scriptures – to understand spiritual truth, and to understand life, and to skillfully put them together.

Hopefully the following model will help you to bridge the gap between study – gathering facts and insights – and actually presenting truth to people so that it touches their lives in a meaningful way.



First, it is important to realize that people need a *reason to listen* to what you have to say. They are not automatically prepared. You need to surface the particular need or area of life which the truth you have studied relates to. You can do this by asking questions, giving an illustration, etc. Once people feel a need for help in that area, they will have a desire to listen.

Second, you can help people further by explaining the *context* of your passage. What is the overall theme of the book? What has the author said immediately before your passage? What is the historical context?

Third, once you're into the passage, you can explain the *details* – observations you made, facts you've discovered, interpretive questions you've had to answer. Try to do this in a clear, orderly way that is easy to follow. And remember, these details should all be leading up to the next step, which is...

Fourth, the truth or truths you see in the Scriptures need to be expressed in the form of a principle. A principle is a short, clear statement which can be easily remembered and applied to life. The Proverbs are an excellent example of this. Coming up with a principle which truly reflects the teaching of your passage, and which is brief, clear, and memorable is hard work! Yet it will give a focus to your study that will pull all the loose ends together.

Finally, the logical step from presenting a principle is to apply it in a variety of life situations, so that the principle is visually reinforced, and so that people are impacted by the truth. The Bible was not given to us by God to satisfy our curiosity; it was given to be used by the Holy Spirit to change lives, which is the true goal of Bible study and Biblical teaching.

"The Sovereign Lord has given me an instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He awakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being taught."

Isaiah, 700 BC

"The true function of the teacher is to create the most favorable conditions for self-learning... True teaching is not that which gives knowledge, but that which stimulates pupils to gain it."

John Milton Gregory, *The Seven Laws of teaching*, 1984

"The Law of the Teacher, simply stated, is this: If you stop growing today, you stop teaching tomorrow."

Howard Hendricks, *Teaching to Change Lives*, 1987