

How to Start a Discipleship Group

by E.A. Johnston

Discipleship is a process of helping individuals become reproducing disciples who can go out and make other disciples.

Duration: 27:22

Scripture: Psalm 119:11, Proverbs 29:18, John 15:8, Acts 2:42, 1 Timothy 4:13, 2 Timothy 2:2, Hebrews 11:6

Topics: "Discipleship"

Description

The video is a sermon on the importance of discipleship and reaching the world for Christ. The speaker emphasizes the need for vision and training disciples to fulfill the great commission. He encourages the audience to focus on reproducing faithful men and women who will go out and teach others. The speaker also provides a format for discipleship meetings and suggests using inspirational videos and testimonies to deepen one's walk with God.

Transcript

I believe we're living in the last days and we need to reach as many people with the gospel as we can and then disciple those individuals and get them grounded in the faith to go and do likewise. I've been a disciple maker for several decades and I know the importance of discipling a group of individuals. The Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ is found at the end of the Gospel of Matthew and there we see the bittersweet scene atop the mountain where the resurrected Jesus stands with his disciples and the text reads, and Jesus came and spoke to them saying, all authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you and lo I'm with you always even to the end of the age.

Amen. Well this picture clearly illustrates our responsibilities as disciples of Jesus Christ but are we up to the task to make disciples literally means to model the method and mandate of Jesus Christ in a reproductive ministry of a one-on-one relationship with fellow believers teaching them what you've been taught. The Apostle Paul sums it up succinctly in his epistle to his disciple Timothy and the things that you've heard from me among many witnesses commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

This should be our method as well friends men teaching men and women teaching women in a one-on-one setting or in a group that meets weekly hopefully in the leaders home. I will provide for you a

tried and tested format that I have used for years to disciple men in my home each week and it works. I've seen men's lives transformed to the glory of God.

Men who beforehand never even dreamed they would go on a foreign mission trip to share the gospel are now seasoned veterans but discipleship is hard work. It's not for the faint-hearted. It's a sacrifice of time, sweat, prayer, and energy.

Family time is sacrificed because in addition to the weekly meeting there's occasionally a knock at the door sometimes late in the evening someone whom you disciple needs help right away or perhaps your spouse has long gone to bed since the evening discipleship group is still growing strong sometimes even till midnight. Over time you learn how to place limitations on group so that it is orderly and organized and once you begin a discipleship group you are hooked because it's habit forming. The blessings you will receive as the disciple maker far outweigh any sacrifices you make as you teach others for it is all about others friends the difference we make in another's life.

The work spent in effective discipleship is for eternity and there is satisfaction in the much fruit that remains and multiplies for it is in the multiplication factor that makes disciple making so effective for eternity and reaching the world for Christ. You see you disciple someone then they disciple someone else. You disciple a group and the individual members of the group go out and get their own group to disciple.

Can you see the possibilities? Dawson Trotman the founder of the Navigators would often cry out in a group, men where is your man? Women where is your woman? Through example we should each be involved in the ministry of discipleship. I will show you step by step how to begin and how to effectively train others for discipleship. This is kind of a how-to message.

Nothing is written in stone however these are merely suggestions and successful tools I've personally used in discipling men over the years. I myself was disciplined by some very godly men and they encouraged me to start my own group and I have disciplined men in both groups from say 12 to 15 at a time and one-on-one. Both are equally rewarding and blessed is the disciple maker who hears from one of his disciples you will never know this side of heaven what an impact he made on my life.

So with our marching orders from Jesus we begin our mission. The first thing is begin in a group and that needs be done before inviting anyone to a discipleship group and the one thing that needs to be done is prayer. Friends do not even attempt to start a group or pick a disciple without first covering this decision in prayer.

My first group was begun that way. I was a reluctant disciple maker. I had been disciplined by two of my city's best disciple trainers and they encouraged me to start my own group but I was pain hearted.

Finally I went to the Lord in prayer and I prayed Lord Jesus if you want me to begin a discipleship group I pray that you give me the men. I leave it up to you. In two weeks I had 12 men coming to my living room once a week and soon that number grew to 15.

God moved in the group and lives were transformed for eternity. Blessed be his holy name and before you begin the group friend there is one other area that needs attention. You.

You must be walking closely with God. Do not attempt to disciple another person unless you have a close walk with God yourself. Are you living a holy life? Are you filled with the Holy Spirit? Are you under the leading of the Holy Spirit? Be a consecrated believer who lives in godly fear of the Lord and God will honor

this and many blessings to others.

Be holy for I am the Lord your God is what the Word of God says. One thing about beginning a group and I strongly caution you here make it by invitation only. It is critically important that you personally invite those men or women to your group if you're a woman.

Don't just make an announcement in church or in a Sunday school class. Few will show up that way. You must get on the phone or email them or walk up to the people and extend a personal invitation.

For disciple making by its very nature is upfront and personal. Show right off the bat how interested you are in someone's spiritual growth. Invite them over for dinner.

Get to know them. The key to success in disciple making is expressing your concern for others. The love and compassion of Jesus Christ must be felt by those whom you wish to disciple.

Invite only those who are in agreement with the doctrine of your denomination. This is very important. Unhappy is the man who starts a group full of Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Church of Christ.

The heated arguments over Calvinism, Arminianism, salvation, baptism, and so on will be the thrust of the meetings and nothing worthwhile will ever be accomplished. So keep it within your boundaries as far as doctrine dictates. This will save you unnecessary future headaches.

Keep it on a level playing field from the beginning. Only allow those whom God has placed on your heart to come. Be wary of the uninvited visitor.

Usually this person is disruptive to the entire group. A friend of a friend needs to be disciplined by that friend, not you. Well, regarding the format, there must be a predetermined format for the group.

This keeps it interesting and organized. Bear in mind you must make allowances for the Holy Spirit to lead it. However, a set format is helpful, useful, and impacting.

An impact is the key word. You impact a person for Christ and you impact others. They in turn reproduce and soon the world is impacted.

I believe that to have an effective discipleship group, you must first change the person. It's vitally important that you seek to move individuals into a deeper relationship with God and to pray that they will experience personal revival. This is the most effective way to disciple others.

We must follow Christ's example here. He called men to himself. Then he transformed them into new men.

Old wine could no longer be placed into new wineskins. This is critically important to effective disciple making. Otherwise you run the risk of your group just becoming another Bible study or fellowship group.

Just because you have some people meeting at your house once a week and chatting and having a good time with the Lord does not mean you have a discipleship group. Please bear this in mind. The purpose of the group or one-on-one meeting is to have Christ transform that person and to impact the world for Christ by disciplining others.

First choose a set day once a week. Then pick a place to meet. Then determine the time of meeting.

My first discipleship group met on Tuesday evenings in my home from 7 o'clock to 8:30. This worked well because most the men had already eaten dinner. That saved me money and had already been home with their family for a few minutes before driving to my house.

This gave them time to put off the business of the day and refocus on spiritual things. The group that I have disciplined over the years has changed from in the evenings to even Friday mornings. I've disciplined men from 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. on Friday mornings.

What works best for you, you'll find out through trial and error. But what to study? It's imperative you know where you're going with your group or individual. Do not make this time just a Bible study and fellowship.

That's not what true discipleship is about. It's about training. You are training individuals to become effective leaders and witnesses for Jesus Christ.

Pray that the Lord will show you what direction to take with your particular group or individual and his purposes are best. And listening to the guidance of the Holy Spirit is the right way to begin any discipleship training program. I want to suggest you some reading materials which I found helpful to have on a little table for the men I've disciplined through the years to read.

I've encouraged men to read these books as well as their Bibles to encourage them in the faith and stir their hearts. Some of the books I recommend are biographies like C.T. Studd's biography or the Man of Faith series is very good on Samuel Morris and Charles Spurgeon, John Wesley. I like the Life and Diary of David Brainerd and the Life of George Whitefield and the Life of Finney or Moody or Jonathan Edwards.

Christian biography needs to be studied. And next I always have a book on discipleship there. My personal favorite is by my late friend William MacDonald called True Discipleship.

That's probably I think the greatest book on discipleship ever written. Please get a copy of that if you can. Also get a copy of Operation World by Patrick Johnston and use it with a map of the world or a globe.

I always keep a big globe near the table where we sit and then I have the men read over the nation out of Operation World and the needs of that nation. And then we lay our hands on the globe and pray for that country, pray for the needs of the people there. This helps to get us world focused.

Next some books on prayer are helpful. Anything by E.M. Bounds or Samuel Chadwick. And I found Reese Howell's Intercessor by Norman Grubb to be an excellent book on prayer.

Also read books on revival like Why Revival Tarries by Leonard Ravenhill. Study any historical revival and get to know how God has moved in former times. But what to teach.

This is important. I am presently discipling. He asked me what material should he get to start his own discipleship group.

He was going to look over some disciple training materials. And I told him this. I said one time about 15 years ago I asked Henry Blackabee after a meeting and I shared with him that I had a discipleship group.

Was there any advice he could give me on what to teach my men. And Henry Blackabee thoughtfully put his hands together and really prayed about this and he answered me slowly and carefully and he said Jesus had a few important things to teach his disciples and he kept teaching those same things over and over again. I would go through the Gospels and look at the truths that Christ taught his men and I would

teach them what Christ taught.

Well I took that advice and that was very helpful. And anytime you go to pray to see what you're going to teach your men in a discipleship group or teach women you want to be sure you're following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But you want to also follow Christ's example because it's Christ discipling the men through you.

Please don't forget that. This way you can minister individually with the right message for that particular person if Christ knows her heart and knows what to put on your heart to reach them. One thing friends disciples are learners.

In John's Gospel chapter 15 verse 8 it reads in the King James. Herein is my father glorified that ye bear much fruit so shall ye be my disciples. Well that little word be is a mistranslation it should really read so shall ye become my disciples.

Become a disciples is an ongoing process and teaching your disciples is what disciple making is all about. As you bring them to a place where they can experience personal revival and you have pointed them in the right direction for going deeper with God then you are ready for the next step. Remember first change the man then change his vision.

The main goal is to get others into a white hot relationship with Jesus Christ that grows on a daily basis through the pursuit of God. Remember that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Next it is time to change their vision because where there is no vision the people perish.

You must get them to see the world through the lens of God's eyes. Your disciples must catch the vision of reaching the world for Christ and fulfilling his mandate in the Great Commission. Your goal is to build a world visionary, world impacting, reproducing disciple.

You will be able to tell early on who in your group is getting the message and who is not. There will be some in your group who are there just for the fellowship and the iron sharpens iron aspects of a normal Bible study and this is fine. God will bless them.

There will however be a few in your group who really go all out for God. Spend more time with these and realize God has given you some Timothy's and Tituses to train up and to be turned into faithful men. This is true reproduction that glorifies God and it's biblical.

Do not underestimate the power of compounding interest. Your disciples if trained properly go out and do likewise. Here is an illustration.

If I give you one penny on the first day of the month and I offer to double the sum each day for 31 days or instead I offer you a cool million dollars, which offer would you take? Well taking the cool million now would cost you, cost you almost ten million dollars. Where did it start? With one penny. So it is with your disciples.

If you get the right men or right women and train them properly they will go out and multiply and the rewards will be for eternity. Teach them how to live a life surrendered to the Holy Spirit in a life of holiness. Teach them how to see a lost and dying world and how to have a desire to do something about it by allowing God to do something through them.

Teach them how to study their Bible effectively. Teach them how to teach or preach and disciple others. Help them to memorize Scripture and make it a habit in their lives.

I used to hand out little Scripture cards with Bible verses on it and we would keep them in our pockets and read them during the week and each meeting I would have each man start and recite from memory his Bible verse for the week. That was very helpful friends. Hide the Word of God in your heart and their hearts.

Teach them to pray. Teach them to pray corporately. Stress the importance of a daily quiet time.

Basically you are teaching them what you know and what you have learned from the Lord and others. If you have never been discipled seek out a mature Christian and ask if they would pray about discipling you. The point is we must not sit back and do nothing.

Once we get on fire for God it's contagious so it's vitally important to get with others and train them in like manner. Here are some suggestions for making the group go smoothly. If you encourage prayer requests be mindful of the talkative disciple who wastes the other's time by droning on and on unnecessarily.

Keep that talker on a tight leash. If you provide food or refreshments keep it simple and inexpensive. My wife occasionally would bake some blueberry muffins for my guys if it was a breakfast meeting or if it was an evening meeting she'd have cookies and dessert.

I provide coffee and light refreshments for my morning meetings but do not spoil them or they'll come to expect food every single time but make it fun. Make your group interesting. Make your group beneficial.

Make your group life-changing. If you follow some of these suggestions you will have fewer bumps in the road on your journey of disciple making. Let's talk about the hour meeting.

Most discipleship meetings should last one hour maybe an hour and a half but keep it to an hour and the time will pass quickly and you will keep your group hungry for more next time. From time to time it's good to play a DVD by a godly Christian to inspire your group to go deeper and have a more vital walk with Christ. I've had great success through the years by showing the video of the Leonard Ravenhill interview done just a few months before his home going.

I've also played cassette tapes of Duncan Campbell's testimony. Just different things anything you think you can use to stir the hearts of your people and challenge them to pursue God in a deeper way. Be sure to allow time to share testimonies or personal prayer requests.

It's a growing group and allow time for growth. This is what I do with a format say if I meet men from 6am to 7am on a Friday morning in my home the first thing I do is I greet them. There's a pot of hot coffee and some breakfast bars awaiting them and I allow a few minutes for them to greet one another.

We then begin with prayer. I ask one man to begin in prayer and we go around the room. I finish the prayer.

They know not to be long-winded. They're asked to pray short vital spirit-led prayers to get us started. Then I open my Bible and share with the man a portion of God's Word from which the Lord has spoken to me that morning or this week and it's amazing how faithful God is on this especially when we seek his guidance in his work.

Next I lead the man in the area of discussion and this is where I feel the Lord is leading for their particular needs that week. This could be something along the lines of holiness or prayer or witnessing, missions, Bible study or studying what Jesus had to say to his disciples. Then I ask if there are any prayer requests.

We need to be aware of any mission trips that might be coming up and write those requests down and then have the others in the group pray for those while they are on the mission field. Put them on index cards and keep those cards in view. Some of my men have taped them to their bathroom mirrors so they could see them when they're shaving in the morning.

Others have put them on their rearview mirrors so they could see them when they're driving down the road. I've kept mine in my shirt pocket sometimes just remind me to pray for my guys who are out on the mission field. So we spend time learning the needs of the lands which God has placed upon our hearts and don't miss this when the men in your group are involved with each other's prayer requests it binds the group together.

When a man in the group comes back from a mission trip and he knows that the other men have lifted his mission team up in prayer throughout each day and have held the ropes it makes for deep friendships which last often a lifetime. Bear this in mind Jesus did not spend most of his time in front of vast crowds preaching. He spent most of his time with his men training them to go reach the masses and that's the key to true discipleship.

We are to be trainers to train others to go reach the masses and to be multipliers. This is how the world will be reached with the gospel. Well next I pray for the men.

I pray for their families, their walk in Christ, their protection from the enemy. I pray that they'll seek to live holy lives unto God. I pray for Jesus to undergird them as they go out this day.

I pray that they will get on their heart what God has on his heart and I pray that God will enlarge their vision of ministry. After all we serve a global God. Then we break up the meeting by ending it and we'll have some refreshments and say goodbyes until next week.

Sometimes I'll receive phone calls from one of my men throughout the week on issues they're facing and if a man needs more personal attention I'll always make an effort to be available to take that man to lunch or to meet him in his car in the middle of the week and see how he's doing. Remember friends always be willing to go the extra mile on the road of discipleship. It pays wonderful dividends that last for all eternity.

Well in closing allow me to make a few more suggestions. There will always come a day when it's time for you to close down your present group. In other words you cannot and should not disciple someone indefinitely.

All the while you're training someone keep reminding them that you're training them so they can go out and train others. We're not to be self-focused and just learn this for ourselves just to go out and reach the world. This is critically important.

If you fail to effectively communicate this that double in a penny stops and mass reproduction loses effectiveness. You are pouring your life into them so they can go and do the same for someone else. They must understand this throughout the entire process.

Tell them at the beginning that the end game is for them to go out and teach someone else what they have learned from you. This is the 2 Timothy principle. 2 Timothy 2.2. Make them memorize that text.

And the 2 Timothy principle is an effective way to reach the world for Christ as we pursue Jesus along the narrow way. Let us follow him and learn of him and teach others what we have learned. This is the way to true discipleship and the path to hearing the words well done good and faithful servant.

Now friends go and do likewise. I hope that what I've shared with you today gives you some help as you pray about and begin your own discipleship group and may God bless you as you pursue him and may he bless all you do for him for the good of his people and the glory to his holy name. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24526.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ea-johnston/how-to-start-a-discipleship-group/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net