



“Discipleship is the process of maturing in following Jesus.”

Discipleship Groups are an environment at Village Church where you take personal responsibility for your own discipleship and the discipleship of others, through the study of Scripture. This step of **personal initiative** is a key move that must take place as we seek to become mature followers of Jesus.

This guide is intended to help you get started with leading a Discipleship Group and guiding that group towards multiplication.

There are several other resources available to you:

- Make sure to listen to the 4-part sermon series, “Multiply.”
- Two books that you will find helpful if you want additional teaching are *Replicate* by Robby Gallaty and *7 Arrows* by Matt Rogers and Donny Mathis. Both of these books are available in the church bookstore.
- Much of the material in this guide is adapted for Village from the ideas in *Replicate*.
- Each Discipleship Group member should have a copy of the “7 Arrows” guide for studying Scripture, available in the church foyer.

The Goal of Discipleship Groups

Our desire is to grow in our own discipleship and to make other disciples of Jesus. But how do we measure if disciples are being made? Our measurement of this in Discipleship Groups is multiplication.

Within 2 years of starting a Discipleship Group, our goal is that everyone in that group has matured enough as a disciple of Jesus that they are ready to start their own group with new people.

- The goal of multiplication helps the group leader stay focused and maintain momentum for the group. This prompts the key question, “What growth needs to happen for each member of this group for them to be ready to lead on their own?”
- The goal of multiplication helps each group member participate with a purpose, understanding their discipleship is equipping them to disciple others.

- Most Christians in our contexts can be ready within two years to lead others in a Discipleship Group. This is an important step of growth, and by not aiming for it we limit the effectiveness of our discipleship
 - *What if someone isn't ready to lead their own group after 2 years?* This is a goal to aim for, not a rule that must be met. But this important goal helps the leader and each member be more productive with their time in Discipleship Groups. If someone isn't ready to lead after 2 years, that is OK. This should prompt a healthy discussion of what more is needed for them to be ready.

The Traits of a Disciple Survey

We have developed a self-assessment survey to help Discipleship Groups discuss areas of needed growth for each group member.

- The Traits of a Disciple survey consists of 6 self-assessment questions across 5 key discipleship traits. These traits are:
 - Faith in Jesus
 - Submission to Scripture
 - Devotion to Prayer
 - Commitment to the Local Church
 - A Life of Mission
- When a Discipleship Group forms, each group member should complete the survey on their own time. In one of the first group meetings, take time to discuss the results with the group. Talk about areas of strength and areas where growth and encouragement is needed.
- This is a tool groups can refer back to every year, to update and see how they are doing.
- When a new person joins a Discipleship Group, have them take the survey and spend a week reviewing each group member's survey again (don't just single out the new person).

Leading a Discipleship Group

Every Discipleship Group needs a leader who helps the group stay on-track with meeting, and eventually with multiplying.

Responsibilities of a Discipleship Group leader:

- Initiate group communication
- Keep group focused and intentional
- Explain group discipleship goals
- Point of contact for adding new group members
- Encouragement of other group members
- Facilitate productive group meetings

Leading a Discipleship Group does not mean your role is one of teaching and the other group members are there to learn. A Discipleship Group leader is also a participant in the group. Every group member is there to learn and become more like Jesus. The leader is a more mature disciple of Jesus who takes on the added responsibility helping other group members grow and seeing the group multiply.

One of the most important things a Discipleship Group leader will do is teach other group members how to lead a group. This is done first by example, and then later by giving each member opportunities to lead the group meeting.

It is also important to remember that leading a group is an important step of growth in the discipleship process. There are things about following Jesus that you will never learn until you take responsibility for helping others grow as disciples of Jesus.

Discipleship Group Format

Discipleship Groups should be made up of 3-5 people – men with men, women with women.

We have found that groups work best as small groups of 3 to 5 people, and there are several reasons for this:

- We learned this from Jesus, he spent much of his time with small groups rather than one-on-one.
- Compared to a one-on-one meeting, a group of 3 to 5 people is better able to maintain consistency long-term. (Eccl 4:12)
- With a few people there is better accountability.
- There is a better discussion of issues where all the pressure is not on one person to respond.
- A small group helps create a dynamic where every member can grow.
- A one-on-one session tends to turn in to a counseling session or mentoring between the more mature believer and the less mature believer. Mentoring can be useful, but that is not the intent of the groups.
- A group of 3 to 5 people is more reproducible. It is less intimidating to lead a group because all the pressure won't be on you, whereas starting one-on-one mentoring is very intimidating and most people will not do it.

What if our group grows to more than 5 people?

- It is important that a group stays at no more than 5 people. Beyond this size, it starts to be hard for each person to participate fully.
- If a group has 5 people and finds another person who wants to join, then it is time for that group to multiply to two 3 person groups.
- This is an important and healthy step, but we want to challenge each other to stick to this guideline.

Discipleship Groups should meet **weekly**. A typical group meeting will last an hour to an hour and a half, depending on how much time you have.

- It is important to meet weekly, because the type of discipleship we're pursuing needs that consistency.
- Yes, this is a sacrifice of time. That commitment is a part of the discipleship process.
- One thing that makes the weekly meeting easier is a Discipleship Group should meet at a time that works for each group member. If the time does not work in your schedule, you will not stick with it.
- Many people find that an early-morning group gives them the most consistency. Make the sacrifice to get up early if needed, but the important thing is to find a time that works best for you.

Discipleship Group Process

What does a typical weekly Discipleship Group meeting look like? The foundation of a Discipleship Group's meeting time is the study of Scripture. Everything is built around this.

- We believe it is the Word of God that grows us and changes us, so there is no system or program apart from the Bible that is going to be some "secret sauce" apart from Scripture.
- To become a mature disciple of Jesus, you have to be able to read and apply the Bible yourself.
 - This doesn't mean you can't have help doing this, like study bibles and commentaries.

- This doesn't mean you can't do this with others in community – that's why we have these small Discipleship Groups.
- But it does mean that we will never become mature disciples if our only interaction with Scripture is what other people say about it.
- We each must learn to spiritually feed ourselves from God's Word.

A typical Discipleship Group meeting time will look like this:

- Spend some time catching up on the week, getting life updates.
- Move to a time of 30-45 minutes of discussing the passage of Scripture for that week.
 - Each group should have a set plan of what Scripture they will be studying each week, planned in advance to help you stay on track.
 - If you are doing an in-depth study of a book this can be one chapter of Scripture.
 - Or maybe you're doing a broader overview and this is several chapters each week.
 - Both ways can work, but the key is having the expectation that each person comes to Discipleship Group prepared and ready to discuss that week's topic.
- After discussing the Scripture or book topic for the week, every meeting should have a time of accountability and challenge for the week.
 - This should be quick, this does not need to be a "confess all your sins" accountability session, although you can talk about real, current struggles.
 - The important element is that this is the kind of accountability where you share with the group how your week has gone in terms of the areas of discipleship where growth is needed.
 - Did you pray and read the Bible?
 - How was family time?
 - How have you done sharing your faith at work?
 - Are you participating at church?
 - And many other questions, which can vary based on the needs of the group.
 - It is also important to leave every week with an application or challenge that each group member is going to focus on that week.

How do you have a discussion of Scripture in group?

Having a discussion about Scripture is much easier if every group member has prepared beforehand.

Encourage weekly preparation as an important part of group participation.

- A tool for doing this that can be very helpful is to keep a journal. Get a journal you can write in for your Discipleship Group, and keep track of what you talk about each week.
- Preparing in a journal is very easy. You simply take the 7 questions you can ask of any passage of Scripture, and answer what stands out to you from that week's reading.
- Make sure everyone in the group has the 7 Arrows handout available from the church foyer. An online version is on the website. For more teaching on this, see Week 3 of the Multiply series.
- You don't have to answer every question every week. The point is that you interact with what stood out to you from the reading, and come to Discipleship Group prepared to discuss that.
- If the passage is longer, you don't have to cover every part of the passage in your answers.
- This level of preparation will make your group meeting time much more productive.

During the weekly Discipleship Group meeting time, each group member should be ready to share what they have prepared.

- Ask each group member what stood out to them from this passage.
- Use the 7 questions to guide a discussion through the passage.
- Another very helpful thing to keep in mind when having a discussion of application of Scripture is the roles we each have in our lives. We all have different roles in life at different times, and they aren't all the same. Here are some examples:
 - Parents, spouses, friends, church members, employees, bosses, neighbors.
 - For each of these roles you have, you can ask the question, how does what we're studying impact that.
- In the background of every discussion should also be the areas we know we are trying to grow in as disciples of Jesus. Keep in mind the Traits of a Disciple survey and consider how the passage of Scripture guides growth in these areas.

Other books?

A question that often comes up is what about studying other books in our Discipleship Groups? Is there a place for that?

- Yes, there absolutely is a place for this, but it needs to be kept in its place.
- The study of Scripture needs to be our primary diet. We have to be very careful not to get away from this because we're missing a big part of our discipleship if so.
- Scripture should be 80-90% of what we do.
- But if there is a particular recommended book that would benefit your group, it's appropriate to take some time for that.
 - Examples might be manhood or womanhood issues, or marriage or parenting, or any pressing issue the group feels like it needs to grow in.
 - The church has several places with recommended resources:
 - All the books in church bookstore in the foyer are recommended for discipleship. Browse there, and if there aren't enough copies you can find more elsewhere.
 - There is a Converge Podcast on ten books every Christian should read.
 - If you are wondering about other resources, please do not hesitate to ask a Pastor.
- If you're going to take a short break to study a book, make sure it's short. Almost no book needs to be read and discussed a chapter a time, a week at a time. These books aren't Scripture.
 - Break the book up into 3 or 4 big sections and get it read in a month.
 - Discuss big ideas, don't get bogged down in minutia. It's ok if you don't read every page of a book if you discuss the ideas.
 - Your time will be much more productive this way, and you can get back to Scripture as your main diet.

The Discipleship Group Process:

- Meet weekly
- Study Scripture together
- Seek to grow as disciples of Jesus
- Challenge and encourage each other
- Learn to multiply our faith in others