

Discipleship Group

2026
Edition

Leader's Guide



Why We Disciple

Discipleship Groups exist because Jesus did not call us to simply believe, **but to follow—and to help others follow Him**. His final words were not a suggestion, but a commission: “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). Discipleship is how faith is formed, lives are transformed, and the Church is multiplied. Throughout Scripture, we see that spiritual growth happens best in the context of intentional relationships—“Follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of people” (Matthew 4:19). As leaders, we step into this calling not because we have arrived, but because we are willing to walk with others toward Christ. The Apostle Paul captured this heart when he said, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Discipleship Groups are our way of living out this mandate—creating space for people to grow in truth, practice the way of Jesus, and be sent to make disciples of others. As Dallas Willard once said, “The greatest issue facing the world today is whether those who are identified as Christians will become disciples.” This is the sacred work you’ve been invited into.

Keys to Leading a Successful Discipleship Group

1. LEAD BY PRACTICE, NOT PERFECTION

You don't need to have it all together — you need to be willing to practice the way of Jesus alongside your group. Growth is caught more than taught. *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 11:1).

2. PRIORITIZE RELATIONSHIPS BEFORE CONTENT

Discipleship flows best through trust. Create space for stories, honesty, and consistency. When people feel known, they're more open to being formed. *“They devoted themselves... to fellowship”* (Acts 2:42).

3. KEEP THE FOCUS ON FORMATION, NOT INFORMATION

The goal isn't finishing material — it's becoming more like Jesus. Measure success by obedience and transformation, not completion. *“Do not merely listen to the word... do what it says”* (James 1:22).

4. ENCOURAGE CONSISTENCY WITH GRACE AND TRUTH

Celebrate effort, address drift, and hold loving accountability. Encourage first, coach second, and challenge firmly when needed. *“Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds”* (Hebrews 10:24).

5. ALWAYS KEEP THE MISSION IN VIEW

Discipleship leads to multiplication. From the beginning, remind your group that following Jesus naturally moves us toward discipling others. *“The things you have heard from me... entrust to reliable people”* (2 Timothy 2:2).

PHASE 1

Relational and Foundational

Phase 1 is about **building trust before building habits**. The primary goal of this phase is to create a safe, relational environment where people feel known, valued, and spiritually supported. Before asking participants to practice disciplines or engage deeper formation, leaders focus on helping the group **form genuine relationships** rooted in honesty and grace.

WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED

- **Trust and Follow Jesus** book
- A committed group of **3–5 people**
- A **weekly meeting time and location**
- Willingness to be **honest, present, and consistent**
- Openness to prayer and sharing personal stories
- A plan to schedule your **Relational Milestone** (group meal)

How to Win in Phase 1

- **Lead with vulnerability first** — trust grows when leaders go first.
- **Prioritize relationships over content** — connection matters more than completion.
- **Normalize prayer and honesty** — create a safe space for real conversations.
- **Set clear expectations early** — clarity now builds consistency later.

WEEK 1

Why Discipleship?

CHECK-IN

Start by creating safety and warmth.

- What's one thing you enjoy doing in your free time?
- What made you say "yes" to being part of this group?

Leader Note: Go first. Model openness without oversharing.

DISCUSSION CONTEXT

Before diving into questions, frame the conversation:

"This first week is about setting the foundation. Before we talk about spiritual habits or growth, we want to understand what it really means to follow Jesus—not just believe in Him."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When you hear the word *disciple*, what comes to mind?
- How would you describe your current relationship with Jesus?
- What do you hope this season of discipleship produces in you?

APPLICATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

- What would it look like for you to fully engage this group?
- What might get in the way of consistency or honesty?

PRAYER

Keep prayer simple.

- Pray short prayers asking God to guide the journey ahead.

WEEK 2

Trust & Community

CHECK-IN

- What was a high and low from your week?

LOOKING BACK

“Last week we talked about what discipleship really is.”

- Did anything stick with you or challenge you after our last conversation?

DISCUSSION CONTEXT

“Discipleship only works in the context of trust. Without it, people stay guarded and growth stays shallow.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think trust is essential for real spiritual growth?
- What helps you feel safe being honest in community?
- What makes vulnerability difficult?

APPLICATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

- What's one way you can lean in relationally this week?
- Is there anything you need from the group to feel more supported?

PRAYER

- Pray for courage to be honest and present.

Prayer as a Disciple

CHECK-IN

- How has your prayer life felt lately—easy, hard, inconsistent?

LOOKING BACK

- Did you notice any moments where trust or connection grew this week?

DISCUSSION CONTEXT:

“Prayer isn’t just something disciples do—it’s how disciples stay connected to God. Today we’re learning a simple framework to help us pray with intention.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What has shaped your view of prayer?
- What makes prayer feel awkward or intimidating?
- How do you usually approach God in prayer?

INTRODUCE ACTS PRAYER MODEL: BASIC WAY TO PRAY

Briefly explain:

- Adoration: praising God for who who is (Good & faithful)
- Confession: Honest repentance, acknowledging or sins
- Thanksgiving: Gratitude for his grace & New Mercies
- Supplication: “God help me with....”

APPLICATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

- Which part of ACTS feels most natural to you?
- Which part do you tend to skip?

PRAYER

- Practice ACTS together as a group.

WEEK 4

Obedience & Following

CHECK-IN

- Where did you feel stretched or uncomfortable this week?

LOOKING BACK

- Did you try praying using ACTS at all this week?
- What was that experience like?

DISCUSSION CONTEXT

“Following Jesus always leads us toward obedience—not perfection, but responsiveness to God.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What’s the difference between knowing Jesus and following Him?
- Why is obedience often the hardest part of discipleship?
- What fears surface when God asks us to change?

APPLICATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

- Is there one area where God may be asking for obedience?
- What would a small step look like this week?

PRAYER

- Pray prayers of surrender and trust.

WEEK 5

Identity as a Disciple

CHECK-IN

- How do you usually describe your faith journey to others?

LOOKING BACK

- Did you take a step of obedience this week?
- What did you learn from it?

DISCUSSION CONTEXT

“What we believe about ourselves shapes how we live. Today we’re talking about identity—not performance.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What voices shape your identity most?
- How does Jesus define a disciple?
- How might your habits reflect what you believe about yourself?

APPLICATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

- What’s one habit that’s shaping you right now?
- Is it moving you toward Jesus or away from Him?

PRAYER

- Pray for clarity and security in identity.

WEEK 6

Community & Consistency

CHECK-IN

- What's been the most meaningful part of group so far?

LOOKING BACK

- Where have you noticed growth—relationally or spiritually?

DISCUSSION CONTEXT

“Discipleship was never meant to be done alone. Community isn’t optional—it’s essential.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do people tend to isolate spiritually?
- How does consistency help build trust?
- What makes showing up difficult sometimes?

APPLICATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

- What would help you stay consistent through this season?
- How can the group support you better?

PRAYER

- Pray for unity and perseverance.

WEEK 7

Commitment & Expectations

CHECK-IN

- What has God been stirring in you during Phase 1?

LOOKING BACK

- How has your view of discipleship shifted?

DISCUSSION CONTEXT

“Healthy expectations protect relationships and growth. This week is about clarity and commitment.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do expectations matter in discipleship?
- What happens when commitment is unclear?
- What does being ‘all in’ look like right now?

APPLICATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

- Are you willing to commit fully to the process ahead?
- Is there anything you need to address or adjust?

PRAYER

- Pray prayers of commitment and faith.

WEEK 8

Relational Milestone

Group Meal / Shared Experience

Leader Focus:

- Celebrate trust built
- Affirm vulnerability
- Preview Phase 2 (formation)

Optional Reflection Questions:

- What has been meaningful about this group?
- How has your understanding of discipleship grown?

Phase 2

Spiritual Rhythms

Curriculum: (*Practicing the Way*)

PHASE 2 OVERVIEW

Phase 2, **Spiritual Rhythms**, is the formation phase of Discipleship Groups. The focus shifts from establishing relational foundations to learning how to **live the lifestyle of Jesus** through intentional spiritual rhythms. This phase invites participants to move beyond information into **formation**, developing daily practices that shape how they live, think, and follow Christ.

Spiritual Rhythms are not about doing more for God, but about **being with Jesus and becoming like Him** over time. Through the Practicing the Way curriculum, groups explore rhythms such as Scripture, prayer, Sabbath, community, and witness. Leaders are not expected to be experts, but **faithful participants who practice alongside the group**, creating space for honesty, reflection, and growth.

This phase emphasizes patience and consistency. Transformation happens slowly through daily faithfulness, not overnight change.

“Train yourself for godliness.” — 1 Timothy 4:7

“Remain in me, as I also remain in you.” — John 15:4

LEADER POSTURE FOR SPIRITUAL RHYTHMS

- Practice the rhythms alongside your group
- Encourage consistency with grace and truth
- Normalize struggle and resistance

- Celebrate effort, not perfection
- Coach gently, then challenge when needed

Phase 2 is successful when leaders create an environment where spiritual rhythms become **sustainable habits**, not temporary challenges.

WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED (PHASE 2)

Before launching **Phase 2: Spiritual Rhythms**, ensure the following is in place:

RightNow Media Access

The primary resources for this phase are available for free through RightNow Media:

- Practicing the Way video series
- Leader's Guide (PDF)
- Participant Guide (PDF)
- Leaders and participants can create a free RightNow Media account through Cornerstone.

Weekly Viewing Plan

Participants watch the assigned videos on their own during the week. Group time is used for discussion, reflection, accountability, and prayer.

Bible Reading Engagement

Scripture engagement is strongly encouraged and checked weekly during this phase. Participants may use:

- Cornerstone Annual Bible Reading Plan
- Discipleship Group Phase 2 reading plans
- Any YouVersion Bible reading plan

Optional Resource

- Practicing the Way (hardcopy book) — optional for those who want to go deeper

Leader Preparation

- Review the weekly content in advance
- Plan questions that emphasize practice and lived experience, not just insight
- Model honesty and consistency in your own spiritual rhythms

Week 9

Invitation & Vision

Focus: Formation over information

Check-In:

- What currently shapes your daily rhythms?

Looking Back:

- What stood out from the introduction?

Discussion Context:

Jesus invites us to follow Him with our whole lives, not just our beliefs.

Discussion Questions:

- What does “practicing the way” mean to you?
- Why does formation take time?

Application & Accountability:

- What rhythm might need to slow down or shift?
- Are you currently on a Bible reading plan?

Prayer:

- Pray for openness to the process

Week 10

Integration (Expansion on week 9)

Focus: Awareness & honesty

Discussion Questions:

- What resistance did you notice this week?
- What felt inviting or hopeful?

Application:

- What's one small step you'll take this week?

LEADER COACHING REMINDERS

- Encourage Bible reading every week (get on a reading plan)
- Celebrate effort, not perfection
- Address drift with grace, coaching, & accountability
- Practice the rhythms yourself

WEEKS 11-12

Apprenticeship to Jesus

Week 11: Being With Jesus

Focus: Identity before activity

Discussion Questions:

- What competes for your attention?
- How do you “be with” Jesus currently?

Bible Check-In:

- How did Scripture engagement go this week?

Week 12

Becoming Like Jesus

Focus: Long-term transformation

Discussion Questions:

- What is Jesus shaping in you?
- Where is patience needed?

WEEKS 13–14

Scripture as a Spiritual Rhythm

Week 13: Scripture & Formation

Focus: Consistency over intensity

Discussion Questions:

- What makes Bible reading difficult?
- How does Scripture shape us slowly?

Application:

- Commit (or recommit) to a Bible reading plan

Week 14

Integration

Discussion Questions:

- What obstacles surfaced?
- What helped you stay engaged?

WEEKS 15–16

Prayer as a Way of Life

Week 15: Prayer & Presence

Focus: Relationship, not performance

Discussion Questions:

- What assumptions do you have about prayer?
- What feels awkward or natural?

Practice:

- Revisit ACTS prayer model

Week 16

Integration

Discussion Questions:

- How did prayer shape your awareness?
- What rhythm feels sustainable?

WEEKS 17-18

Sabbath & Rest

Week 17: Trust & Rest

Discussion Questions:

- Why is rest difficult?
- What fears surface when you stop?

Week 18

Integration

Application:

- What will you protect or remove to rest well?
- What drains you in your personal Life? How can you shift your perspective to turn that into a life giver?

WEEKS 19–20

Solitude & Silence

Week 19: Creating Space

Discussion Questions:

- What distractions are hardest to set down?
- What does silence reveal?
- How are you going to practice solitude this week?

Week 20

Integration

Practice:

- Share what solitude surfaced
- How did you practice solitude and how would you practice it differently next time?

WEEKS 21-22

Community, Generosity & Service

Week 21: Outward Formation

Discussion Questions:

- How does community form us?
- How does generosity shape our hearts?
- How can we serve together next week?

Week 22

Integration

Relational Milestone:

- Serve together (group activity)

WEEKS 23–24

Witness & Rule of Life

Week 23: Mission Flows from Formation

Discussion Questions:

- Who is God placing on your heart?
- How has formation changed your awareness?

Week 24

Rule of Life

Focus: Sustainability

Discussion Questions:

- Which rhythms will you carry forward?
- What needs to stay simple?

Prayer:

- Pray for long-term faithfulness

PHASE 3

Personalized Growth (8 Weeks): Growing Where It Matters Most

PHASE PURPOSE: Phase 3 gives your group space to focus on real needs in the current season of life. After establishing spiritual rhythms, groups now grow deeper by studying a shared topic or book of the Bible that will be most meaningful and applicable right now.

Discerning The Focus

DISCERNMENT QUESTIONS

Use these to identify shared themes:

- Where do you currently feel stretched or stuck?
- What topics or questions keep surfacing in your life?
- What would help you follow Jesus more faithfully right now?
- What would make this phase most helpful for you?

POSSIBLE FOCUS AREAS

- A book of the Bible
- Prayer or spiritual growth
- Relationships, marriage, or parenting
- Faith, doubt, or theology
- Calling, work, or decision-making

Next Step:

- Identify 1 shared theme
- Notify staff only if unsure about the resource

LEADER ROLE

- Facilitate group discernment (don't decide alone)
- Keep focus on application, not information
- Maintain relational connection and accountability
- Ensure Scripture remains central

WEEK 26-31

Weekly Flow

- **Relational Check-In:** Where did you see God this week?
- **Looking Back:** How did last week's conversation impact you?
- **Discussion:** What stood out from the content or reading?
- **Application:** How will you live this out this week?
- **Prayer:** Pray for what surfaced

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What challenged or encouraged you?
- How does this connect to your real life?
- What is one next step you can take?

Week 32

Relational Milestone

Everyday Outreach

PHASE 4

MULTIPLICATION: The Mission of Jesus

PHASE 4 OVERVIEW

Phase 4 is the **mission phase** of Discipleship Groups. After building relationships, establishing spiritual rhythms, and growing in focused areas, the group now turns its attention outward. This phase centers on **Jesus' clear command to make disciples** and invites each participant to see themselves as a disciple-maker.

The goal of Phase 4 is not pressure or guilt, but **ownership of the mission of Jesus**. Discipleship was always meant to multiply. Leaders help the group understand that making disciples is not reserved for pastors or experts, but is the natural next step of following Jesus.

This phase prepares participants to intentionally invest in others and consider launching their own Discipleship Group in the future.

“Go and make disciples of all nations.” — Matthew 28:19

“The things you have heard from me... entrust to reliable people.”
— 2 Timothy 2:2

How To Win In Phase 4

- **Cast vision, not pressure**

Keep the focus on Jesus' heart for people, not obligation.

- **Keep it relational**

Disciple-making begins with relationships, not programs.

- **Ask direct questions**

Help participants name who God is placing on their hearts.

- **Celebrate obedience over outcomes**

Faithfulness matters more than results.

- **Point toward next steps**

Encourage participants to consider leading or investing in others next year.

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND (LEADER COACHING)

- Some resistance is normal — multiplication can feel intimidating
- Not everyone will be ready at the same pace
- Small steps still count
- Your role is to invite, not force
- Model the mission yourself

Phase 4 is successful when participants leave with **clarity, courage, and a willingness to take the next step**, trusting that God will do the multiplying.

OPTIONAL RESOURCES FOR THIS PHASE:

“Multiply”- Francis Chan

Although you will not be going through this book chapter by chapter. It might be beneficial to pick this book up and read through it.

You can Visit or discipleship group website for the free E-Book Version (cornerstone.org/disciple)

Or you can purchase a hardcopy from our **Cornerstone Bookstore**

The Call to Multiply

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

“Go therefore and make disciples...” — Matthew 28:19-20

DISCUSSION CONTEXT

Jesus’ final command to His followers is not optional activity — it defines what it means to truly follow Him. Francis Chan emphasizes that disciple-making is not just for pastors or missionaries, but for every believer. Many Christians have reduced discipleship to “attending church” without actually making disciples.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does it mean to make a disciple in real life — beyond attending church?
- Why do you think many Christians feel unprepared or unqualified to make disciples?
- How does Jesus’ command shape your understanding of your mission?

APPLICATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

- Who is one person in your life God might be calling you to invest in?
- This week, pray intentionally for that person and look for divine appointments with them.

PRAYER

Pray for courage and clarity to join Jesus on mission.

WEEK 34

The Heart of a Disciple-Maker

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

“And he said to them, ‘Follow me...’” — Matthew 4:19

DISCUSSION CONTEXT

Chan highlights that disciple-making flows out of a disciple’s own transformation. It is not merely sharing information, but living life with others in ways that reflect Jesus’ love. True disciple-makers model Christlike behavior, not perfection.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the difference between being a consumer of Christianity and a disciple-maker?
- How do others see Jesus when they watch your life?
- What fears or barriers keep you from living this out?

APPLICATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

- This week, choose one practical way to love and serve someone in your circle.
- Share with the group how you will do that, and commit to reporting back next week.

PRAYER

Pray for hearts shaped by love, not obligation.

WEEK 35

The Local Church & Community Mission

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

“Love one another... encourage one another...” — Hebrews 10:24-25

DISCUSSION CONTEXT

Multiply stresses that discipleship happens in community — not isolation. The church is the essential vehicle for disciple-making. We are not called to go it alone; we are called to live, serve, and multiply in community.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does community shape your growth as a disciple?
- What is the role of the local church in multiplying disciples?
- How can our group be the church in our neighborhoods?

APPLICATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

- Identify one way your group can serve the church or your neighborhood together this week.
- Each group member shares one relational step they will take with someone outside the group.

PRAYER

Pray for unity and missional boldness as a group.

WEEK 36

Sustaining Multiplication

SCRIPTURE CONTEXT

“...teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you...”

— Matthew 28:20

DISCUSSION CONTEXT

Multiply challenges believers to not just make disciples temporarily, but to raise up disciples who make disciples in turn. The mission continues beyond this group’s timeline.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does multiplication look like in your life and community?
- How will you continue to walk with others after this phase?
- What is one next step you can take toward leading your own discipleship circle?

APPLICATION & ACCOUNTABILITY

- Each member writes down:
 1. One person they will invest in spiritually
 2. One practical next step toward making disciples
- Share commitments with the group.

PRAYER

Pray for multiplication — for courage, opportunities, and obedience.

Celebrate The Journey

Congratulations. You did it.

Leading a Discipleship Group through this entire pathway is no small thing. You showed up consistently, created space for others to grow, practiced spiritual rhythms alongside your group, and faithfully pointed people toward the mission of Jesus. Thank you for saying yes to this calling and stewarding it well.

As you close this season, we encourage you to intentionally **celebrate together as a group**. Celebration is not an extra—it is a vital part of discipleship. Throughout Scripture, God’s people paused to remember what He had done, to give thanks, and to mark meaningful moments (Deuteronomy 8:2; Psalm 126:3). Celebration helps people reflect on growth, name what God has done, and solidify the significance of the journey they’ve shared.

This final relational milestone is a moment to:

- Share stories of transformation and answered prayer
- Express gratitude for one another
- Celebrate obedience and faithfulness
- Look ahead with hope toward what God may do next

Whether it’s a shared meal, a night of stories and laughter, or a simple gathering filled with gratitude, let this be a joyful closing moment. Ending well honors the work God has done and reminds everyone that discipleship is not about finishing a program—it’s about lives being shaped and sent.

Well done. Your faithfulness matters more than you know.

FINAL LEADER PHASE

Sending & Staying Connected

(From Group Completion to Next Launch)

This final phase is not about weekly meetings or formal curriculum. It is a **season of sending, encouragement, and prayerful preparation**. As a leader, your role shifts from facilitating a group to **walking alongside people as they step into the mission of making disciples**.

Your primary responsibility during this season is to **stay relationally connected** and continue to **cast vision for multiplication**.

WHAT THIS PHASE LOOKS LIKE

- **Semi-regular check-ins with group members**
 - A text, coffee, or quick conversation
 - Asking how they're doing spiritually and relationally
- **Ongoing encouragement toward multiplication**
 - Remind group members that discipleship doesn't end here
 - Encourage them to prayerfully identify 2–4 people they will invite into their own Discipleship Group next year
- **Prayerful support**
 - Pray for clarity, courage, and obedience
 - Pray by name for the people they feel called to invite

SUGGESTED CHECK-IN QUESTIONS

- How are your spiritual rhythms going right now?
- Who has God placed on your heart to invest in?
- Have you identified your 2–4 people yet?

- What excites you—or feels intimidating—about leading next year?
- How can I support or pray for you in this season?

LEADER POSTURE IN THIS PHASE

- Encourage without pressure
- Celebrate steps of faith, even small ones
- Normalize hesitation while pointing back to the mission
- Keep the vision in front of them

This phase is successful when group members move from **“I completed a discipleship group”** to **“I am ready to disciple others.”**

FINAL LEADER REMINDER

Multiplication doesn't happen all at once. It happens through prayer, relationship, and obedience over time. Your continued presence and encouragement in this season plays a crucial role in helping others step into what God is calling them to next.

“The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” — Matthew 9:37

Thank you for helping send disciples who make disciples.

