

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Discipleship is a way of life, a state of being. It is rooted in a living relationship with Jesus, in which we learn and grow by following Him and living His way. A disciple is someone who is called to learn how to be a place in the world where the acts of God can come alive. Discipleship is something we journey together, creating a culture of honour, love, vulnerability and transformation. As our lives are transformed, so the world around us will be transformed.

This can be done in many ways, but you can also engage in this journey in small groups, with someone committing to meeting with teenagers/students/men and women regularly, investing their time and being generous in hospitality, journeying through foundations of faith and allowing a space for sharing, praying, celebrating and being honest together. This can be an amazing space to nurture disciples, be mission focused and transform lives.

Why form a group?

To connect people—to successfully engage young people into groups where they can form relationships. Forming relationships is the first step toward discipleship.

Discipleship also involves a process of spiritual maturity that needs spiritual disciplines and a space to be developed, which is where the Youth Rhythms of Life can support.

Empowering young people also encourages them on their journey of discipleship.

The key is having men and women who are ready to commit to journeying with young people, encouraging them in their personal relationships with God, showing sensitivity to the needs of the group and investing time will help them move from forming relationship to true discipleship.

How to form as group

Engage the wider church community to think about committing time to a small group once a week, and also recruiting within safer recruiting of volunteers.

3 key principles for a running a group

- 1.** Listen to your group and work out their natural and spiritual gifts. Encourage them to engage their gifts to bless the rest of the group and then their friends and wider community.
- 2.** Be encouraging. You are there to see them the way God sees them and to speak life into their lives, sometimes having to look beyond the behaviour and see them in the way God sees them.
- 3.** Teach them from the bible and your own faith journey (make sure you have the right resources)

How to be missional in a group

For spiritual growth and discipleship to take place, the people in the group need authentic relationship and to meet regularly.

At the same time, every small group has a mission because every Christian is called to mission. While that mission may vary based on when and where the group meets, there are three specific ways that every group can be on mission:

1. Engage new people. Every person has a network of unchurched or disconnected people they interact with every day, and a small group is a great, safe place to invite them, especially if they are people who are exploring faith or have questions.
2. Serve together. Find a local charity, cause, or need that you can rally around. Serving together is essential to developing the shared-life experiences that are so important to people in groups.
3. Start new groups. As your group grows and matures, multiply it in your community by starting a new group. If the leader is being intentional about the group's mission, he or she should be developing new leaders who can step up and lead a group of their own.

How to measure how they are going

The first measure of how successful the groups are is are they growing spiritually and multiplying?

At the end of the year, do you have more people in groups than when you started? Numbers aren't everything, but on mission, small groups are contagious, and growth will naturally occur.

Secondly, you can look at participation in the church. Are more people volunteering to serve in the church? Are more people giving their time and resources to serve outside the church?

Few things must be in place.

1. Leaders must create an environment where making disciples who make disciples is the DNA of your ministry.
2. Every leader needs to have been discipled or part of their own group so that they instinctively and strategically do what they have, themselves, experienced.
3. Every leader must be aware of the stages of spiritual maturity, the markers in each stage, and what is necessary to take someone to the next level of maturity.
4. Every leader must model the life of a mature disciple.
5. Every leader must consistently affirm the growth they are seeing in each group member so that group members remain motivated to continue their journey.

6. Every leader should, when possible, invite their small group to join them when they are ministering to others.
7. Small group members need to agree that the goal for their lives is to be, not just a church member, but a mature, reproducing disciple of Jesus Christ.
8. Small group members must commit to do their part in the process so that they become mature followers of Christ and someday make disciples themselves.
9. Small group meetings should include opportunities for persons other than the group leader to take on a role or carry out a responsibility
10. Every small group leader must be taught how to empower group members as they set them free to make disciples themselves.