

Way of Discipleship Small Groups

How do disciples grow?



Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

What helps you, not only to learn new things, but to make them part of the way you live?



Understanding the information (15 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

‘From my desk at college,’ writes Shane Claiborne, ‘it looked like some time back we had stopped living Christianity and just started studying it. If we are to make disciples, we must do more than help people acquire biblical and theological information. Our task is not simply to study the Word of God; it’s to get it off the page and into our lives.’

The Bible itself often tells us this: ‘Don’t read it, eat it,’ God said to the prophet Ezekiel. ‘Don’t speak it, live it,’ he said to Hosea. ‘You claim to know what it says, but you have no understanding of its power,’ Jesus said to the Pharisees. ‘The Word of God is living and active,’ said the writer to the Hebrews; ‘it is meant to change us and change the people around us.’

To grow in this way there are (at least) four important elements.

Jesus’ method of growing disciples has parallels in the way people learn a new language. Firstly we need information and to be taught. Growing obviously involves knowing some vocabulary and grammar. There is a body of information to be absorbed. So Jesus taught His apprentices in that He gave them information. The Sermon on the Mount, Lord’s Prayer, parables, the greatest commandment. People needed their minds shaped to understand what relationship God wanted with them, and the mission they were invited into. By and large, we are very good at this in church circles and in society.



But what is more helpful in actually being able to use a language is being able to listen to people speaking it, and to imitate them, sometimes with unintended results. Information alone won't make you a speaker.

Modelling and imitation is at the heart of apprentice style learning. Jesus invited his disciples to live life as He lived it. He demonstrated everything He taught – how to pray, to heal, to teach, to love their enemies. They learnt by observing Him. Most famously He did this at the last supper, when having washed their feet He said, “ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.” (John 13: 14-15). I would say that the people who have had most influence on me are the ones whose lives I have sought to imitate. Discipleship is more caught than taught.

But I'll tell you how language really improves. By living in the country! When you have to actually use your knowledge, improvise, immerse yourself in the culture, down the market, in the college, the words you have read on the page, and repeated after other people, actually start to become a living language. Jesus taught his apprentices, he demonstrated, but then He sent them out on His mission. They learnt on the way.

This is common educational wisdom in action: as the proverb says, “Tell me, I'll forget. Show me, I'll remember. Involve me, I'll understand.”

Finally, Jesus' disciples reported back. They checked in on how they were getting on. One of the most loving ways in which we can help each other is by asking one another questions about how we are growing. This shouldn't be threatening, but both encouraging and challenging. The people who show us the most love are the ones who want to help us grow.

Discuss: Gaining information, imitating a good model, putting things into practice and “reporting back”. Which of these four elements do you think is most fruitful in helping us to grow?

Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read John 13: 1-17 which describes how Jesus teaches, demonstrates to and grows His disciples.

Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:

What does this passage teach me about God?

What does this passage teach me about people?

How does this passage call me to obey God?

What might I do in response to this this week?



Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

Watch the video at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g108ndl1Z7w>

What struck you as important in the video?



Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



Group prayer (5 minutes)

Thanks be to you, our Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits which you have given us,
for all the pains and insults which you have borne for us.
Most merciful Redeemer,
Friend and Brother,
may we know you more clearly,
love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly,
day by day.
Amen.





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