

Way of Discipleship Small Groups

What does daily discipleship look like?



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)

Whose voices and opinions do I pay attention to most?

What matters more - what you say you believe or what you put into practice? Why?



Understanding the information (15 minutes)

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

On a daily basis how we put God at the centre is shaped by simple principles:

Paying attention to God. We are constantly paying attention and responding to different voices in life. Being a disciple at its most basic is growing in responding to God above all else. Jesus said God's word is more important than food: "Humans do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4) He had a deep sense that His life was shaped by God's leading: "'I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.'" (John 5:19). One writer put it like this: "We are what we hear from God." (Emil Brunner.)



In Mark 1:14 we read, "Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" All that God wants in the world is now close – His love, His presence, His healing. God is not far from people – and the whole of the gospels are full of people responding to God. Jesus is showing how at the heart of being a disciple is wanting to be open to His presence by recognising the moments where God is close, and how He is working. In our daily lives, the kingdom of God in God's world is near. It may be that certain events – positive or negative - become the doorway to us recognising it, and asking, "God, how do you want me to respond?" God may speak through our successes or failures, through things we see, hear or read; large or small happenings, things we do or are done to us. The disciple will be growing in paying attention in all these things.

Responding to what God is doing by repenting and believing. Jesus said when you notice God's kingdom, you need to repent. Repenting means to "turn our minds" from seeing things our way to seeing things God's way. But changing our minds is only part of the process. He said we also need to believe. Believing means starting to live differently as a result. Believing here is deeper than what goes on in our minds. It is starting to let our choices and relationships be shaped by how God is acting and calling us, demonstrating in our lived experience what we are really trusting in. From the beginning Jesus is describing the heart of being a daily disciple as paying attention to God in moments of opportunity and responding by living in new ways.

Daily discipleship is a close relationship: In the words of Pope Benedict 16th, "Faith is above all a personal, intimate encounter with Jesus, and to experience his closeness, his friendship, his love; only in this way does one learn to know him even more, and to love and follow him ever more. May this happen to each one of us."

Daily discipleship is growing in seeing where God is present in your life: Archbishop Rowan Williams says, "The true disciple is an expectant person, always taking it for granted that there is something about to break through from the master, something about to burst through the ordinary and uncover a new light on the landscape. The master is going to speak or show something; reality is going to open up when you're in the master's company and so your awareness ... is a little bit like that of a bird-watcher, the experienced bird-watcher, who is sitting still, poised, alert, not tense or fussy, knowing that this is the kind of place where something extraordinary suddenly bursts into view."

Discuss: What might help me notice where God is getting my attention?

Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read Mark 1: 14-20 in which Jesus gives His first sermon and calling.

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=ViPyjtg-MWE&t=8s>

What struck you as important in the video?



Optional further material and questions

Share these thoughts or read them together:

Knowing God's teaching and putting it into practice

It's possible to pay attention to God's presence, and to get to know His teaching, yet for that to make little difference in our lived experience. In a sense this is like "repenting" (changing the way we think), without believing (changing the way we live.)

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus gives us a large amount of teaching on what the life of discipleship looks like. But, crucially, immediately after this there comes the parable of the wise and foolish builders. One builds on rock, and when, "The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house...yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." But the other builds on sand. When the storm comes, it "fell with a great crash." Both builders have heard God's words and received His teaching. But that is not what makes the difference. The wise person in the parable, whose house remains standing, is the one "who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice."

Doing all this as a response to God's love and grace.

It is crucial that our daily obedience is only about responding to God's grace. Imagine if you gave someone you love a gift for their birthday and they asked you, "Why did you do this?" Now imagine you reply, "Because I had to." Or, "Because I was afraid you would be angry if I didn't." Wouldn't you have missed the whole point?

The only good reason for giving a gift is love. Similarly, obedience and response to God which doesn't come from love is not only destructive for our lives but undermines our sense of God's great love for us. The first and greatest commandment is to "Love God." Julian of Norwich put it like this, "The greatest honour we can give to God is to live gladly because of the knowledge of His love."

The motive for being a disciple can only be because we are loved, forgiven and accepted by God, even before we think about obeying Him. "We love, because He first loved us." The starting place for obeying God can only be this: the more we grow in receiving His grace, the more we will want to pay attention and obey. Responding to God in obedience is therefore effort, but it is never earning. We are already loved, whether we obey or not. One writer puts it, "Love is our identity and calling. Neither knowing God or knowing self can progress very far unless it begins with a knowledge of how deeply we are loved by God....In order for our knowing of God's love to be truly transformational, it must become the basis for our identity.....And identity grounded in God would mean that when we think of who we are, the first thing that would come to mind is our status as someone who is deeply loved by God." One of the best reasons for responding to God is not to gain an identity but because He has already given us an identity.

Discuss: What makes us want to obey God? How can obeying God be an expression of your identity?

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)

Christ with me.
Christ before me.
Christ behind me.
Christ in me.
Christ beneath me.
Christ above me.
Christ on my right.
Christ on my left.
Christ when I lie down.
Christ when I sit down.
Christ when I arise.
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me.
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me.
Christ in every eye that sees me.
Christ in every ear that hears me.
Amen.



Participants' handouts on following two pages.



What does daily discipleship look like?

EVERYDAY THE WAY WE PUT GOD AT THE CENTRE IS SHAPED BY SIMPLE PRINCIPLES:

1.) PAYING ATTENTION TO GOD

"We are what we hear from God." (Emil Brunner.)

At the heart of being a disciple is wanting to be open to God's presence by recognising the moments where He is close. Jesus' first sermon was, "The kingdom of God is near!"



Certain events - positive or negative become the doorway to us recognising God's closeness, and asking, "God, how do you want me to respond?"

God may speak through our successes or failures, through things we see, hear or read; large or small happenings, things we do or are done to us.

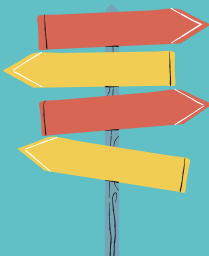
Pope Benedict 16th: "Faith is above all a personal, intimate encounter with Jesus, and to experience his closeness, his friendship, his love..."

Archbishop Rowan Williams: "The true disciple is an expectant person, always taking it for granted that there is something about to break through from the master... The master is going to speak or show something."



2.) RESPONDING TO WHAT GOD IS SAYING BY

**Changing our way of thinking (repenting)
and
Starting to live differently - (believing - as
revealing what you trust through your actions)**



3.) GROWING IN KNOWING GOD'S TEACHING AND PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE.

The wise person in the parable of the two builders, whose house remains standing, is the one "who hears these words of mine **and puts them into practice.**" **Getting on a ship and trusting it** to take you to the other side of the sea is the act of faith.



4.) TO DO THIS OUT OF LOVE, NOT DUTY, AS AN EXPRESSION OF OUR IDENTITY.



The motive for being a disciple can only be because we are loved, forgiven and accepted by God, even before we think about obeying Him. "We love, because He first loved us."

The more we grow in receiving His grace, the more we will **want to** pay attention and obey.

Responding to God in obedience is therefore effort, but it is never earning. The best reason for responding to God is not to gain an identity but because He has **already given** us an identity.

WE COULD SUMMARIZE THIS AS HAVING A DAILY ATTITUDE WHICH SAYS:

In everyday moments...

What might God say to me?

How might I respond?

