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WHAT IS INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP?

Discipleship, at its core, is all about learning what it means to follow Jesus. The purpose of this booklet is to help each of us take ownership in our own spiritual journey as we grow in our understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

The language of discipleship is captured in our mission statement as a church. The Christian faith journey is about having a real encounter with the living God, growing in relationship with Him and ultimately becoming a people who serve like Jesus served. In short, intentional discipleship is all about helping people encounter grace, grow in grace and become grace givers.

Encounter: Experience God in real and relational ways

Grow: Deepen the understanding of our faith

Give: Loving and serving like Jesus

The means of intentional discipleship will be focused on practicing:

- Prayer
- Bible Study
- Spiritual Disciplines
- Accountability

These are not rules to follow; rather they are practices that help us know Jesus better.

HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

Getting started doesn't have to be complicated.

- Grab 2-3 people and say, “My church is going through this process, and I’d like to go through it together with you. What do you think?”
- Together, start an intentional conversation about personal spiritual growth.
- Explain that the format is simple and informal, with a basic structure to guide discussion.
- Commit to meeting on a regular basis—weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly.
- Set expectations about where to meet and how much time to commit.
- Walk through the elements of Intentional Discipleship as a group and on your own, in a spirit of mutual learning.



WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Intentional Discipleship can happen in many different ways. Here's one simple example format to help get going.

Consider trading off leadership responsibility from meeting to meeting, so group members take turns opening/closing and facilitating discussions. Remember, this doesn't have to be a formal gathering... there's no right or wrong way to meet when it comes to learning how to follow Jesus together!

1

Open with prayer.

2

Ask opening questions of one another: How is your heart? What does life look like right now? What is God teaching you in the middle of that?

3

Together, examine the biblical passage you've chosen to study. Talk about what you're learning or noticing in Scripture. How is God speaking to you as you dig into His Word?

4

Pick an accountability question to wrestle through together, and plan to probe into the answers next time you meet. What is God bringing to your attention in this area of life?

5

Select a spiritual discipline to practice together. During your next meeting, talk through the challenges and rewards of practicing this discipline. What is God showing you through the experience?

6

Close with prayer.

PRAYER

As we learn what it means to follow Jesus, we want to be, before all else, people of prayer—people who seek the heart and the will of God, as Jesus modeled for us in His life on earth. Through Intentional Discipleship, we'll focus on growing deeper in prayer, as individuals and as a group.

Start with prayer

At the beginning of your meeting, take a few minutes to calm your hearts and thoughts.

Ask that the Lord would quiet any outward or inward “noise” going on in the lives of your group members.

Pray that everyone may be present in the moment and attentive to the voice of the Spirit during your time together.

Close with prayer

At the end of your meeting, ask your group members for prayer requests.

What specific things are happening in the lives of group members? Ask God to guide each path and direct each one's thinking.

Ask the Lord to help each group member deepen in prayer, increase in knowledge, strengthen in discipline, and engage in accountability.

Remember one another in prayer

Encourage your group to pray regularly for for each other throughout the week.

Pay attention to the rhythms of life. Notice the times during the day when you're most connected (or most open to connect) with God. Practice turning your thoughts to prayer during these times.

Make a point to lift up members of your group to God in prayer. Practice praying for each person by name. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill each one with His care, direction, compassion, and delight.

BIBLE STUDY

The Bible is God's living Word, Spirit-breathed Scripture, revealing the Lord's plan and purpose for all of creation through His Son, Jesus Christ. That's why dedicated Bible study is essential to knowing God and growing in relationship with Him. Here's one approach:



Step 1: Observation—What does the passage say?

- Look carefully at what is actually being said, and how it is said. Ask questions about the content: who? when? where? why?
- Examine the structure of paragraphs, passages, and connections between main points.
- Pay attention to repetition. The number of times a word or topic appears is an important indicator of its significance.
- Notice relationships between ideas: causes and effects, ifs and thens, questions and answers, comparisons and contrasts.

Step 2: Interpretation—What does the passage mean?

- Understand the context. At minimum, read the verse immediately before and immediately after. Better yet, read the chapter immediately before and immediately after!
- Look up cross-references. Let Scripture interpret Scripture. Other passages in the Bible can shed a lot of light on the passage you're studying.
- Research biblical times. Some cultural/historical factors are explained in the Bible, but most aren't. Look up unfamiliar words, read study notes, or search for historical information online.

Step 3: Application—What will we do about what the passage says and means?

- How does the truth revealed here affect our relationship with God?
- How does this truth affect our relationships with other people?
- How does this truth affect us personally?
- How does this truth affect our responses to weakness or temptation?

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Spiritual disciplines are a way of intentionally connecting with God, personally and relationally. As a group, select a discipline to focus on until your next meeting time. Make a point to focus on disciplines that challenge you to put God first, in the areas where that's difficult.



Celebration—Remembering God's provision and sharing the joys of living for Him.

Chastity—Abstaining from physical intimacy for a specified time to focus on fulfillment with God.

Confession—Recognizing and admitting sins to the Lord and other trusted individuals.

Devotions—Spending regular, dedicated time reading Scripture and reflecting on its importance in daily living.

Fasting—Skipping a meal (or a series of meals) to focus on finding sustenance in God.

Fellowship—Meeting regularly with other Christians in mutual ministry to one another.

Frugality—Meeting basic needs while learning to spend fewer resources.

Generosity—Giving extravagantly to share the joys of God's good gifts.

Meditation—Ruminating on a biblical passage or truth, focused on hearing what God is saying.

Prayer—Talking to and listening to God about relationship with Him and concerns for others.

Sabbath—Observing a holy day of rest and worship for the purpose of glorifying God.

Sacrifice—Giving of time, energy, or resources for the wellbeing of others.

Servanthood—Avoiding self-promotion by giving anonymously or by being of service without others noticing.

Silence—Removing internal and external distractions to hear from God.

Solitude—Spending a dedicated time alone to be fully with and focused on God.

Study—Applying mental abilities to deliberately gain in knowledge of Scriptural meaning.

Worship—Offering praise and adoration to God through singing and rejoicing.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Spiritual accountability

challenges us to practice reflection, confession, and discipline in community with one another. With your group, pick one or two accountability questions to focus on and explore together during your meeting time. Then pick one or two questions for your next meeting.

Accountability Questions

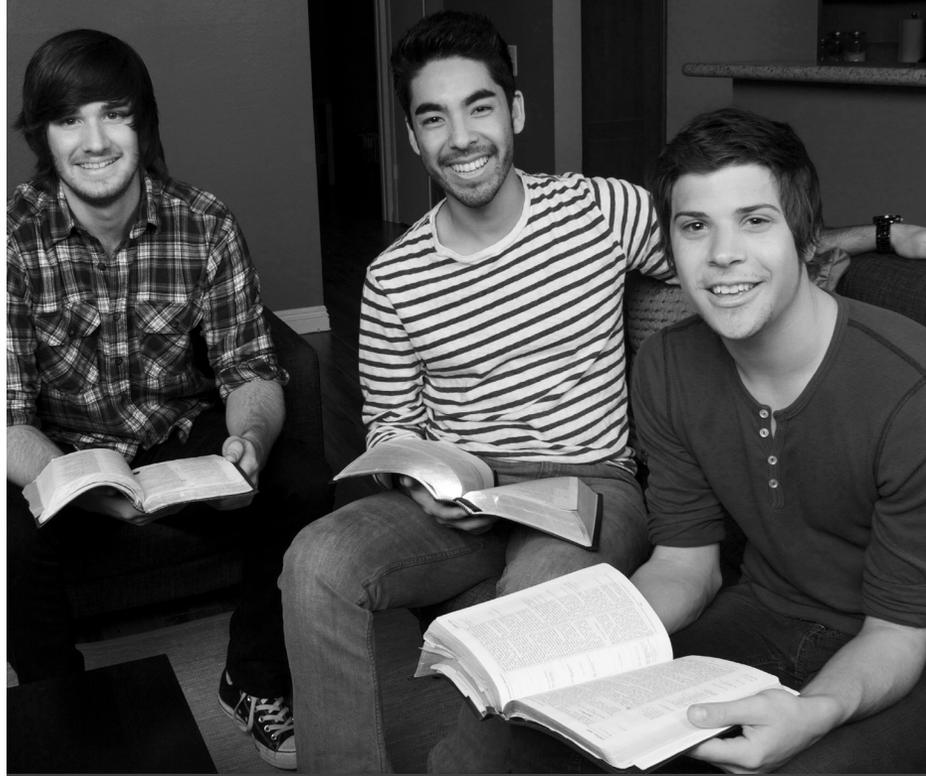
1. Am I creating the impression that I'm better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
3. Do I confidentially pass on to others what has been said to me in confidence?
4. Can I be trusted?
5. Am I ruled by image, relationships, work, or habits?
6. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
7. Do I give the Bible time to speak to me every day?
8. Am I enjoying prayer?
9. When was the last time I spoke to someone about faith?
10. Do I pray about the money I spend?
11. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
12. Do I disobey God in anything?
13. Do I insist on doing something that troubles my conscience?
14. Am I feeling defeated in any part of my life?
15. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?
16. How do I spend my spare time?
17. Am I proud? Do I compare myself to other people and thank God that I'm "not like them"?
18. Is there anyone I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, resent, or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?
19. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
20. Is Christ real to me?

**WHERE DO WE
GO FROM HERE?**

Intentional discipleship isn't something we do once and then check off our to-do lists. It's not a scheduled class or a topical discussion. It's about an ongoing process of sanctification—being made in the image of Jesus Christ, by the power of His Spirit at work in us.

Prayer, Bible study, spiritual disciplines, and spiritual accountability are not the goal, but rather, methods of engaging in a deeper, more personal relationship with our living Lord.

At the same time, journeying alongside one another in faith, we develop lasting relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ. As a community living on purpose for Jesus, we Grow in Grace, together.



For Further Study:

The Sacred Echo: Hearing God's Voice in Every Area of Your Life by Margaret Feinberg

Bible Study that Works by David L. Thompson

Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth by Richard J. Foster

SoulShift: The Measure of a Life Transformed by Steve DeNeff & David Drury

