
What is Discipleship Part VI

© 1987, 2002, *Discipleship Tools* www.discipleshiptools.org

A Model to Equip Leaders

The church is called to find the most capable people possible and protect the flock from potential harm. Never put just anyone in any position; it is better to have empty positions than the wrong people in them! The essential key is for you to find people whose heart is after God's heart (1 Cor. 11:1)! It is always best to find people who have done it before, but this is not necessary, as long as you train effectively. The biggest reason why churches fail at discipleship and Small Group Bible study ministry is they fail to train the leaders; the result is the occurrence of all kinds of problems (Rom. 12; Phil. 3:10-14, 4:8-9, 13; Col. 1:28-29; 4:7ff)!

As church leaders come together to pray for wisdom on group dynamics and direction. If you are developing more than one discipleship group or Bible study, here are some helps:

- Create your own Bible study training booklet; use this article, the article on why to be in Small Groups, and how to resolve conflict ([Talking your Way out of Conflict](#) and [Agreeing to Disagree without Disunity](#) and [Preventing Conflict](#)). You will then have your own manual. Make any needed changes and put your church name on it. (Please keep our copyright info on it, too.)
- Realize that since the dawn of the Church, finding leaders and workers has been a tough task. Our call is to do it even when the results might seem like failure (Matt. 9:37-38).
- Look for a person who is grounded in the Word, has a good temperament, an aptitude and desire to lead, and the willingness to be supervised. If he or she does not like supervision, consider that a red flag warning!

Most of our Discipleship Tools curriculums and all of the *Into Thy Word Bible Studies* www.intothyword.org are self contained, have the notes, outlines and questions already in them, thus the "leaders" are more like "facilitators." Whereas when you develop your own Bible study then you or they are more active in their creation process, in either case below are some principles to help create a better "safer" Bible study where people can feel welcomed and loved that smoothes the progress for better learning and growth:

Preparation

How much time does it take to prepare? It depends on if you are using a prepared lesson like we have. If so, just a few hours or less, read the passage at least three times, then read the lesson and mark which points you want to cover, usually the general idea first, then do the questions and as questions from people come up, go over some of the word meanings to answer them. Then end with the application questions and then the closing thoughts. Most people say they can use our Discipleship Tools

curriculums and any *Into Thy Word* studies after a couple of hours of preparation. If you are using another prepared study guide such as one from Navigators, it may take you around an hour to read the passage and go over the study notes and questions. Why do ours take longer? Because they are more in-depth and comprehensive and we have 2 to 3 times more information than you would normally use. So you have to go over it to see what fits your people and study goals. Remember the more time you put in it, on any curriculum or format you use, the better quality the teaching, learning and discussions your group will have. Keep in mind this is stewardship, how much will God be glorified if we are in a rush and skimp on it, is He glorified?

To totally develop your own study may take at least 10 and up to 20 hours, to outline the passage, do some inductive research and prepare some questions. It takes us 40 to 100 hours to prepare each of our studies due to all the research we put in it, this is because we use them as training tools and to be published, your studies do not need to be that comprehensive.

Types of leaders

Depending how you feel called to structure your Small Groups you can assign leadership functions to one or more people for each group and even rotate leadership in those groups.

Teacher: This person is the primary leader for the Bible study. They can provide the teaching, be in charge of the curriculum, and/or for starting and facilitating the discussion, making sure everyone has a chance to contribute and no one person dominates the group. This role can rotate from week to week but it is best to have a consistent person. If there is a rotation, then someone needs to take responsibility of choosing the leaders, curriculum, make sure it flows, and that the right set of course and questioning are being used.

Host: This person provides the logistics, hospitality, a place for the study (small groups work best in a home, Bible studies can be at the church too), keeps it fairly neat and welcoming, and facilitates the refreshments. Also, he or she keeps a list of the members, takes attendance to make sure absent people are followed up in the week to see how they are doing, provides good driving directions, gets the curriculum out to people a few days ahead of time if needed, and gives an email or call to remind people periodically. This position can also be rotated as long as consistency and the location are known to all.

Prayer: This person is in charge of the prayer to start the group, and facilitate the prayer at the end. This is an important job; each person should have the opportunity to share prayer requests. Keep your pastor, church, community, government and other concerns in prayer, too. It is best to write down each person's request and keep a record of it for seeing answers and growth and to follow up when necessary. Many resources are in our prayer channel under Discipleship ([Prayer](#)).

Other roles can include a **Socials Coordinator** as each group should do something fun every other month, like a dinner out, a movie, a trip, a yearly retreat, or? There can be a **Care Coordinator** to follow up on people in times of stress or absence, a **Worship Leader** to provide a few minutes of worship, a **Child Care Coordinator** (I have found that if three or four Small Groups that meet at the same day and time pool their resources to

hire a sitter, this provides an excellent way to have cost-effective child care in a central location). The point is, not everything should be done by one person!

These people do not need to have theological knowledge or experience; they are the pump primers to get things moving and ask the questions. This works best when you use curriculum that already has the teaching and questions in it, such as any of our studies. You can have groups where people take turns to lead; this has also worked well, especially for professionals and moms who are busy. A good leader is a listener and will help everyone get involved in the discussion. Not all will talk; but there needs to be an atmosphere for dialogue without reproach from others. A good leader will not allow one person, especially him or her, to dominate the discussion unless it is a leader-based Bible study. Even so, community and discussion must be practiced and encouraged.

Basic Small Group, Discipleship Group or Bible Study Structure

There is no best way to structure your Bible study, but there are proven precepts that help structure each group for efficiency, learning, and care in the time allowed. These are suggestions based on a one hour to a one and a half hour and two hour model. For more length, add several minutes of time to the teaching, and break into sub small groups for at least 20 minutes of discussion and prayer, see: ([The Main Goal of Bible Study](#))!

Before you begin the study, it is essential that you spend time in prayer before people come and to start off with when they do come! Of course for personal one on one, you do not need such a structure, but you may glean some principles.

Suggested Schedule for a 1 1/2 Hour Bible Study:

7:00-7:10 Fellowship
7:10-7:25 Worship (3 to 5 songs) and or prayer or welcoming and *how is your day* questions.
7:25-7:35 You may want a bathroom and snack break
7:35-8:15 Bible Study (40 min)
8:15-8:30 Prayer requests and prayer
8:30 Dismiss in prayer
8:30-? Fellowship

Suggested Time Schedule for a 2 Hour Bible Study:

7:00-7:10 Fellowship
7:10-7:25 Worship and or prayer (3 to 5 songs)
7:25-7:35 Break for snacks and bathroom
7:35-8:15 Bible Study (40+ min)
8:15-8:45 Discussion and prayer (sub-groups or together) (15+min) and prayer (10+min)
8:45-8:50 Re-gather for dismissal in prayer
9:00-? Fellowship

- **Fellowship / Warm up:** Serve refreshments, fellowship, perhaps have instrumental worship music playing too.

- **Prayer:** Open with prayer!
- **Worship:** not necessary but it is great to have! If you do not do worship, then add the time to your prayer time. Also in this section you can have *how is your day* questions see Life Groups ([Doing Life Together](#)) for smaller groups.
- **The Study:** Lecture, Curriculum, inductive, exegetical, verse by verse, or...read the passage, then give any relevant teaching that will help stimulate learning and discussion (20 to 40+ minutes), keep in mind that most people are bored after 20 min, thus ask questions from the lecture to stimulate interaction and thinking. Consider a fun opening question (5 minutes). (The Serendipity Bible is a great resource for this, as well as any discussion starters from Youth Specialties; they work great for adults too.)
- **Discussion & Questions:** Encourage discussion; make sure everyone has the opportunity to participate, and seek to end with an application (15+ minutes). For larger groups with more time divide up into small groups for discussion and then you also may come back for a rap up.
- **Close in significant Prayer:** Spend some time asking how everyone's week has been, then spend time fervently praying for one another, the issues from the above categories, and specifics that have come up (15+ minutes)! For larger groups (20+) this should be done in the small groups.

Discipleship and small groups as well as Bible studies are usually one and a half hours to two hours; it depends on time constraints and availability of the people. Sometimes in an adult Sunday school class you may just have an hour. Do not forget to leave room for fellowship. Perhaps your time is 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., thus you actually start at 7:10 and end promptly at 8:30. This leaves room for people to get to know one another, share life, and fellowship. Make sure you respect people's time.

Then, you need to structure and organize the studies in your church for area coverage, days of the week, and types offered to benefit each member. Also, a leadership structure needs to be in place. For example, for every seven to 10 Bible studies, you need a coach/trainer and a pastor or coordinator in charge of them all. In larger churches you will have Bible studies at the church and in people's homes, you can group the home based Bible studies and Small Groups into groups according to where they live under regional coordinators/leaders whose primary responsibility is to train and be a help for the groups in their area. You can have three areas, four to six or more for major metropolitan areas. Make a flow chart, but make sure your chart and structure is flexible and based on prayer, not in feelings and/or personal agendas. It is also best to have regular meetings for group leaders at least every other month for prayer, training, encouragement, and feedback.

Bible Study Training

What does the essential training entail? Basically, it is what is in this article: Also focus on the Basic Inductive Bible Study Principles and how to resolve conflict. Typical training can also include:

- Ministry vision, philosophy, and leadership structure.
- Various curriculum offerings, training in how to use them, and their Bible content.
- Prayer ideas.
- Group dynamics.
- Interpersonal relationship skills.
- How to care better.
- How to gain new members.
- How to facilitate more effectively.
- How to resolve conflict.

The Bible studies need to be under the influence of the church and its set parameters, but not over-controlled. Some liberty and freedom needs to exist to allow room to grow and explore other options that the church leadership did not consider, as long as biblical integrity is kept.

What do I Study?

Before you start, it is very important that you spend time in prayer finding what God wants you to teach. Then ask people what they would like to learn, what are their “real” spiritual needs not just their “felt needs.” For example most people would like to study Revelation, but this is not good unless they have a grasp on the rest of Scripture.

For new discipleship groups or mentoring, we suggest using our curriculum, starting with the 101 series and going from there. You may also use our Faith series to start too. Any of our studies can be used for discipleship and mentoring.

For new Bible study groups, it is best starting out with a shorter Book from the New Testament, such as James, also Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Peter, 1 John. You can also go over a few from the Old Testament such as selections from Psalms, Daniel, Ruth or Jonah. If you are an established Bible study over an year, then venture into a larger book such as one of the Gospels, Acts, Romans, Hebrews, and Old Testament books of Genesis and Isaiah. You can also study sub topics in a book and still go exegetically, such as Jesus’ Parables, His Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5-7 or the Olivet Discourse from Matthew 24 (essential before studying Revelation), Spiritual Gifts from 1 Corinthians 12-13 and Romans 12 and 14, also the Life of Abraham from Genesis 11-25, Elijah from 1 Kings 17-19, 21, and 2 Kings 1-2, 12, the Names for God and Jesus. There are also topical studies such as Love, Character, Faith, God’s Will or a study for New Believer’s and many more topics too.