

**Discipleship Group Leader**  
**First Baptist Church of Medina**

What it looks like to be a “Discipler”

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20

Making disciples of Jesus is what these verses are all about. They are some of Jesus’ last words that ought to be the top priority of the church (every Christian).

A few words to note as you enter in to the role of being a discipler:

- Your success in disciple making is measured by how many disciples make more disciples and continue to follow God for the right reasons and navigate the unknowns long after your influence fades. (Adapted from Sustainable Discipleship)
- Never forget - All authority belongs to Jesus and is only delegated to us (Matt 28:16-20).
- Never forget - This will likely be more intense, focused study and transparency than what your disciples have experienced in their walk with Christ. Display grace but beware of relaxing the standards. Keep in front of them that the intimate, life filled relationship with Jesus that one can develop makes it all worth it.
- Never forget - the Holy Spirit is the one who does the spiritual work. Depend on Him!
- Being a disciple who makes disciples is what Jesus’ last command is all about. You are embarking on something that some, even other believers, may consider radical but is simply obedient to God’s Word.
- Being that participation in this is being obedient to God’s Word, it is a spiritual act and cannot and should not be done in physical power. A personal seeking of the Lord has to continue. You cannot lead others well if you are not leading yourself well.
- Participation in this will put a target on your back. Satan is always going to take notice of those being intentionally obedient to God’s Word. Always remember - Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7

When ready to begin a new Discipleship Group, please fill out the group registration found on [firstmedina.org/discipleship](http://firstmedina.org/discipleship) under Discipleship Groups. Please contact me at First Baptist Church of Medina - [Steve.lytle@firstmedina.org](mailto:Steve.lytle@firstmedina.org) | 330-725-5853 x105 if you have any questions. We are excited to see how God works through you, and those you disciple.

Grace and peace,

Steve Lytle  
Discipleship Pastor, First Baptist Church of Medina  
Romans 5:6-8

## What is Discipleship?

A disciple is fundamentally a learner or pupil. That makes discipleship the process of teaching a learner or a pupil. In the context of being a disciple of Jesus, discipleship is teaching a learner or pupil how to follow Jesus.

To understand more of the Jewish understanding of discipleship, read:  
<https://bible.org/article/being-first-century-disciple>

## Anatomy of a Disciple

1. Knowledge - Every disciple needs to be continually gaining knowledge of God and how he ought to live before God through The Word
2. Practice - Discipleship is not about knowledge only but also about the Holy Spirit affecting/changing the thought, attitudes, and actions that one displays to look like that of Christ. As Jay E. Adams says, "Discipleship means the renunciation of all ties - even the closest and dearest ones in life. It does not always mean that we must forsake all others in order to follow Christ, it does mean that we must have such allegiance to Him that we are ready at all times, if called upon, to do so." In other words, Christ is first. Love, wisdom, courage and humility have to govern our practice. But now faith, hope and love remain but the greatest of these is love. - 1 Cor 13:13; How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver. - Proverbs 16:16; Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! - Joshua 1:9a; But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. - James 4:6
3. Multiplication - A disciple is one who is actively making more disciples

## Method of Discipleship

Discipleship, as seen by the example of Jesus, happens in a life on life scenario. Discipleship should include a long term commitment of consistent, formal discipling times (sitting down for a Discipleship Group (D-Group) Meeting) but should also include informal discipling times (servangelizing together, meals together, helping each other on a house project, etc.).

- **What is a D-Group?** A D-Group is a closed group consisting of 3-5 Christians (people who have decided to follow Jesus) of the same gender who for a period of time (at least 52 weeks) agree to meet together to pray, study the Bible (see "Content for Discipleship" below), memorize scripture and be transparent with each other about their faults (See "Transparency Questions" below) all for the purpose of fulfilling the mission Jesus left us with - be disciples of His who make more disciples. It is not evangelistic in its form or function, but in its fruit as it makes disciples, who then make disciples. It is the shift from

a lecture atmosphere with one teacher (typical church service) to an intimate, transparent relationship with a handful of like-minded people. This blueprint is sketched by Jesus Christ.

- **Who can be in a D-Group?** To be part of a d-group, each group member must be someone who has already decided to follow Jesus. However, it does not matter if a person is a new or a seasoned Christian. Groups are gender specific (all guys or all girls) and should exceed no more than 5 individuals (including the discipler). Though 1 on 1 discipleship is an option, it is not preferred. The smallest a group should be is 3 members including the discipler.
- **Where do we meet?** Groups should meet in a public setting, away from the church building or someone's home - ie. restaurant, coffee shop, library, etc.
- **What is the duration of a meeting?** The typical D-Group meeting duration is 1.5 hours. However, this can vary.
- **What do I need to bring to a meeting?** To be prepared for a D-Group meeting - one should bring their completed SOAP journal entries, a pen, their Bible, a prayer request and money for coffee/food (if needed, based on where you meet).
- **What does a D-Group meeting look like?** A typical meeting will look like:
  1. Scripture Memory Check
  2. Prayer
  3. Sharing of Journal Entries
  4. Transparency Questions
    - Have you spent time in the Word and prayer this week?
    - Have you proclaimed the gospel or your testimony to an unbeliever this week?
    - Have you spent quality time with your family this week?
    - Have you had any lustful thoughts?
    - Have you viewed anything immoral this week?
    - Have you told any self-promoting lies this week
    - Have you participated in anything unethical this week?
    - Have you lied about any of your answers?
    - Other potential questions include questions like:
      - For men: Have you loved your wife well this past week?
      - For women: Have you respected your husband well this past week?
      - How is time in God's Word affecting your marriage? Parenting?
      - How have you loved the unlovable this week?
      - Is there anything you are holding on to that you need to forgive and reconcile with the offender?
      - Have you damaged your testimony by what you said or did this week?
      - Is there anything that needs to be forgive that you are holding on to?
  5. Prayer

- **Outside of Formal D-Group Meeting**

- In discipleship, much is caught rather than taught which requires a life on life relationship. A discipleship group is not meant to simply meet formally once a week, but should there should form a bond within the group members that results in doing things together, outside the formal meeting time - ie. communication, serve the community, participate in evangelism, share meals, help with house projects, etc. The disciple should be able to walk along side of the discipler to hear how they talk, see how they respond to difficult situations, hear how they pray, understand how they handle money, see how they love their spouse and children, etc. There should be a “rubbing off”.
- Being a disciple of Jesus means that you closely follow His teachings and life. One cannot become a disciple simply by knowing information but having that information move the disciple to action: (The list below is not exhaustive)
  - Get baptized
  - Leading families spiritually
  - Make Church attendance a non-negotiable
  - Right broken relationship(s)/forgive anyone you have anything against
  - Solitude/Unplugging
  - Fasting
  - Servangelism
    - Proclaiming your testimony/the Gospel to an unbeliever
    - Serving without the expectation of gaining anything in return
      - Not only in the church but in your family and the community
      - Not just the token time, but making this a consistent action done in love
  - Submission to authority
  - Personal Reflection
  - Worshipping - Privately and Publicly
  - Proclaiming your testimony/the Gospel with an unbeliever
  - Risk for the Gospel
  - Giving back to God what He has allowed you to steward - time, talent, treasure

## **Content for Discipleship**

There are a ton of discipleship materials out there. However, it has to be remembered that the early church made disciples before all of these materials existed. Truly all that we need is what the early church needed - God’s Word. Currently we are utilizing a modified version of the F-260 Bible reading plan from Replicate.org. You can find this at [firstmedina.org/discipleship](http://firstmedina.org/discipleship). The reading plan is set up for reading and journaling 5 days a week. Memory verses are set up in such a way that a new verse or passage is being memorized every 4 weeks.

## Studying the Bible

Reading and journaling comprise our study of the Bible. Journaling is guided by the SOAP method. SOAP stands for Scripture, Observations, Application, Prayer. A further explanation is given at [firstmedina.org/discipleship](http://firstmedina.org/discipleship). Click on “S.O.A.P Journal Reading Method”.

SOAP Journaling has two primary functions:

1. Teach personal study of the Bible

Many times Christians think that they have to have a Bible degree, own or consult commentaries and know Greek or Hebrew to be able to study the Bible. Although each one of those aforementioned things are helpful in studying the Bible and are good gifts God has given us today, they are not absolutely necessary. As Christians we have the Holy Spirit, who is the best teacher (1 John 2:27). As well, God gave us a mind that we are to love him with (Matthew 22:37) which includes exercising it in the understanding of God’s Word. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, as we exercise our minds by employing the simple outline of Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer to scripture, any Christian can study the Bible.

2. Biblical Meditation

Meditation is a concept that typically brings to mind a person with their legs crossed, eyes closed and each hand out with their thumbs touching their index fingers humming “mmmmmmmm...”. The idea is to empty your mind to achieve a level of peace or something greater. That type of meditation finds its origin in eastern religions. The Bible speaks of meditation as well (Psalm 1:1-2, 77:11-13 are a couple examples) but it is very different. Biblical meditation is about quieting our hearts with scripture in pursuit of a deeper intimacy with Jesus. It is not about emptying one’s mind but filling it with and considering deeply the truths of God’s Word and God Himself. Biblical Meditation is something that has been for the most part lost in our day and time. SOAP journaling moves Christians toward not just reading scripture to check Bible Reading off their list for the day but Biblical meditation.

Notes on studying the Bible:

- It is helpful to have a Study Bible to aid in study, especially to understand the background of a book of the Bible before reading it. In fact, it should be a regular practice to study the background of a book before reading it. For this purpose, if no Study Bible is available (ie. The ESV Study Bible), go to [firstmedina.org/discipleship](http://firstmedina.org/discipleship). Under “Old Testament Survey” and “New Testament Survey”, backgrounds for each book of the Bible can be found.
- The “O” in SOAP is crucial. The “What is Biblical Hermeneutics?” article found at [firstmedina.org/discipleship](http://firstmedina.org/discipleship) will assist in this. Please make it a point that your D-Group read this.
- If those in the D-Group are not ready to break off following the 52 week period either by the discipler’s account or by the disciples’ account (See “When is a disciple ready to become a discipler?” below for help with this), the D-Group Bible reading plan can just

be started all over again by everyone involved and can continue in that until those in the group are ready. The Discipleship Group Leader as well as those in the Discipleship Group will not use their journals that were done previously but read and journal afresh. For extra memory verses, check out “Scripture Passages to memorize” on [firstmedina.org/discipleship](http://firstmedina.org/discipleship) and go down the list at whatever pace you decide upon as a group.

## **How to choose those you will disciple**

Think of how Jesus chose the twelve. They were not the brightest and best of their day—that’s for sure. Most likely these men had been overlooked or discarded by the religious leaders of their day. They were common men. So don’t let external signs deter you. Instead, we should look at Jesus’ example and what he did. Here are some things we learn from Jesus.

### **Pray for Disciples**

First, pray. On the night before Jesus chose the twelve men he would invest his life into, he spent the night in prayer (Luke 6:12-13). I’m sure Jesus prayed for the Father to make it clear to him who he should choose. At the very least, he was praying for specific people he had in mind. What else was he praying for that night with such a major decision? So should you start with prayer.

### **Look for Persons with Spiritual Interest**

Second, look for those who have an interest in spiritual matters. As Jesus prayed about whom to select, he chose men that had already shown a high interest in spiritual things. Jesus didn’t have to twist their arms. After all, it was Andrew and John that pursued him in the very beginning (John 1:39). After this meeting he spent almost two years with them, watching their behavior and seeing their hearts. Out of his relationship with them, he was able to choose men who were eager to grow. When the Apostle Paul chose Timothy, he noticed that Timothy had a good reputation and was eager to grow (Acts 16:1-3). The best disciples are those in whom the Spirit of God is already at work, which is often seen as a hunger for spiritual things. Their spiritual light is on. Start looking around you. Ask God to show you the ones that are eager and ready to grow.

### **Find the Faithful, Available, and Teachable**

Third, look for F.A.T. people. That’s right, F.A.T. people who are faithful, available, and teachable (the first letter of each word makes F.A.T.).

Paul told Timothy to invest his time in “faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). Choose people who are faithful to do what you are training them to do. You

certainly don't want to put time into a person who will not be faithful to do what call them to do. That's why Paul told Timothy to look for faithful men. Jesus chose faithful men.

Choose people who are available, who will create time in their busy schedule to meet with you for training. I will often see a person who is eager and faithful, but is not available. There are too many demands and too many distractions in life. Jesus said that these people are like a seed sown among the weeds. They hear the Word and they begin to grow but the "care of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and the desire for other things" strangle out the potential for growth that God is working in their life (Mark 4:19). Therefore, they don't really bear lasting fruit in their lives.

Lastly, look for those who are teachable, not those who argue every point or play the critic. Look for those who are teachable and eager to learn. This is huge!

Taken from: <https://discipleship.org/blog/how-to-choose-disciples-wisely>

### **Other important points to consider as a "Discipler" <- Don't skip over this section!**

- Disciple someone of the same gender.
- It may be best not to pick people you are good friends with. Picking people you are good friends with might make it hard to truly hold them to what was agreed upon as well as speak truth into their lives when they are in sin.
- If possible, seek to disciple others younger than you or those for whom you would be perceived to be *"one life stage ahead"*. Physical maturity and spiritual maturity are not the same so this is not a hard and fast rule, however, older believers teaching younger believers is a biblical principle that should be practiced if possible (Titus 2:1-5).
- The optimal scenario is to disciple someone that you have just had the chance to evangelize and lead to Christ.
- As a discipler, you are committing to take the people that God gives you through the discipleship process you have come through as a part of a Discipleship Group. The disciple is to be held to a high level of commitment and it is not wrong to keep that level high (Colossians 3:23). Remember at the same time that as the leader, you set the standard. That means you cannot expect a commitment level out of your group that is not found in you.
- Submitting our lives to one another (Ephesians 5:21) is by definition a two-way street, as should be discipleship.
- As you get into D-Group, be intentional about learning about the life circumstances and personalities of each member so you know how to best harness it all to focus each person on being transformed in Christ.
- Obtain the right to speak into your disciples lives. Gain their permission to press any buttons you see. This should be on the understanding that you may not always be right,



but you will always be straight with them even if it is a friend. A mark of maturity is speaking truth in love even if it is hard to speak.

- Agree that you will push them out of their comfort zones (emotionally, intellectually, functionally, relationally) and drop them in at the deep end but that you will be there for them if they're drowning to rescue them!
- Use wisdom in this but a good idea is to have members of your D-Group rotate leading the weekly D-Group meeting by around week 25. This puts an onus on you to train them right in leading and this puts onus on them to have to think through leading and not always just participating.
- Determine that mistakes are not the same as sin, and that they are allowed as doorways to maturity not trapdoors to obscurity.
- Sin will happen. It needn't be hidden or denied but confessed and dealt with.
- Go over the Discipleship Group Agreement interspersedly to remind all members of the group (including yourself) what was committed to
- Never promise absolute confidentiality, as this places you in a vulnerable position legally (issues of child protection, abuse, criminality, etc.).
- Only pass on information on a "*need to know*" basis which is ultimately best for all concerned, and with the knowledge of your disciple.
- Throughout these articles I have referred by way of shorthand to you as the discipler, and to your disciple. But always agree and remember this truth; we are all disciples of Christ. You may disciple others but they are His disciples, not yours!

Adapted from: <https://www.livelife123.org/train-me/article/4/sub-article/16> and added to (Other adapted pieces of this article are used throughout this packet)

### **When is a disciple ready to become a discipler?**

Remember, your success in disciple making is measured by how many disciples make more disciples and continue to follow God for the right reasons and navigate the unknowns long after your influence fades. When knowledge of scripture as well as attitudes, thoughts, and actions are consistently more like Jesus with little to no influence of yours, as much as can be known by the discipler, the disciple is ready to go make disciples. People will generally feel as though they are ready before they are actually ready. The recommendation is that everyone goes through a full D-Group year. The reality at the same time is that not everyone should be leading a D-Group after the 1st time through. It might be that a person should not be leading even after the 2nd time through. The disciple becoming a discipler should never even be considered apart from prayer by all parties involved.

## Process for Beginning a D-Group

1. Pray - This is where discipleship starts. Pray that God would open your eyes to who He would have in your discipleship group.
2. Identify - Identify those people, 2-4 of the same gender. See “How to choose those you will disciple” on [firstmedina.org/discipleship](http://firstmedina.org/discipleship).
3. Ask and explain
  - Ask the people you have identified if they would be interested in being a part of your Discipleship Group.
  - Explain that it is a least a year-long weekly commitment centered around study of the Bible, personal transparency and Bible memorization. Direct them to the web page, [firstmedina.org/discipleship](http://firstmedina.org/discipleship), to check out the “Disciple Packet” or print it out and hand them a packet to look over before they officially commit.
4. Follow-up - Follow up with the people you identified and asked to be part of your D-Group to see if they have read the information and “are in”.
5. Meet
  - Determine a day and time to get everyone together for a first D-Group meeting.
  - 1st meeting
    - Make sure again that everyone has read the packet and “is in”.
    - Have everyone sign and give you the agreement.
      - Emphasize the points on the agreement and when it comes to being at Church, emphasize not just being there on Sundays but being involved in the life of the church.
    - Make sure it is communicated from the get-go that the idea with this is that those in the D-Group now will one day lead their own D-Group. At the same time make sure to specify that this is not about replicating a system but is about being changed/transformed/molded into a true disciple of Jesus and then leading others toward that same thing.
    - Point them to “Your Story” found at [firstmedina.org/discipleship](http://firstmedina.org/discipleship) and have them work through that sheet in this meeting. Stress the importance of proclaiming the Gospel to those that are lost. Refer back to this sheet as you ask the transparency questions in coming weeks.
    - Read through the hermeneutics article found at [firstmedina.org/discipleship](http://firstmedina.org/discipleship) together. Refer back to this article as you meet in the coming weeks.
    - Make sure everyone knows about [firstmedina.org/discipleship](http://firstmedina.org/discipleship) and the resources on it.
    - Decide on the day and time for future meetings.
  - See “What does a D-Group meeting look like?” above for future meetings.