



Gospel Discipleship
Small Group Facilitator Guide
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Thank you for agreeing to guide a small group through Gospel Discipleship. I hope that you will find it a rewarding experience to help people better understand discipleship and then create an environment both of accountability and support as they grow in their discipleship.

As the leader, you are not intended to be the expert. You are instead encouraged to be the one who helps guide conversation and insight. There are some elements that are helpful for building strong support and growth dynamics. Seek to include these elements in the group called to meet together:

Communication

You should seek to help create an environment in which healthy and regular communication occurs. You, or someone with this gift among you, should seek to check in with group members between meetings with reminders that the time to gather is upon you. You should also touch base with any group members who miss, especially if that group member has not already corresponded with the group to let them know they won't be there. This helps group members know their presence matters.

You should also help the group remember to create a space for each other where each person is comfortable sharing their perspectives. Remember that each of these discipleship types are based on a particular Gospel, and no one Gospel is better than the others. They are all unique and different. The understandings of discipleship that rise up from these Gospels are also unique and different. We are stronger together than divided up. Understanding where we are all coming from will allow us to work alongside one another better.

For this reason, it is recommended that when we are discussing some of the challenging aspects of a discipleship type that we use language that aims it at the understanding of discipleship, rather than talking in terms of the people who fit that discipleship. For instance, you will note that questions that invite people with different types to reflect on the type being discussed by asking, "What challenges you most about the Markan understanding of discipleship?" instead of "What bothers you about Markan disciples?"

Hospitality

As we gather in groups to learn from and alongside one another, it is important to create a hospitable space. That does not necessarily mean a perfectly clean place. Instead, it means a space imbued with warmth and love. A space that is accessible. A space that allows everyone room to share. So you don't have to bring them into your home. But maybe meeting in a loud sports bar would not be the best idea. And if you are meeting using technology, try to make sure everyone has an understanding of how that technology works. You can point

them to some YouTube tutorials or offer to walk them through a practice session.

It is also suggested that as you lead a group, you remind everyone that we are all coming from our own perspectives. To grow honestly in our discipleship, we need to share our challenges. Remind everyone to honor that person's perspective by listening with intent to hear rather than respond. Also remind everyone that we should all be invited to share how we experience interactions with others in our discipleship, and to name that as our experience, which does not invalidate another's perspective. It is just a different experience.

Commitment and Consistency

One of the keys to growing in our discipleship is having a community of people who are paying attention to how we grow. This community can be as small as you and God. However, when it is just the two of us, too often we make excuses when we get off track. It is helpful, then, to have others who can walk alongside us. This is where a small group committed to nurturing our relationship with God can be very helpful.

These groups work best when everyone is committed to the work. This does not mean that we will always show up and be at our best. On the contrary, we need to be comfortable bringing our authentic selves to the table. Discipleship is full of joys, but also full of challenges, at least if we are growing. So as a group we need to make a commitment to each other. Each group might even want to come up with a covenant among each other.

It is also important to commit to meeting consistently. That encourages each of us to pay attention to our walk with Jesus. It also helps us build relationships with each other. You will see that this leader's guide is built around meeting weekly. You can meet less frequently if that works best for the group, but you should at least meet once a month. Remember the time you give to the group reflects the discipline that you are developing in your walk with Jesus. Frequency is not necessarily indicative of depth of commitment, but regular engagement in the times determined as working for the group do. Keep in mind as well that meeting longer than 2 hours may turn counter-productive. It is good to keep the timeframe fairly compact so that the group stays focused on the work before us.

It can prove helpful for group members to check in with anyone who misses. Help them know that their presence matters. Encourage them to be consistent in their walk with Jesus. You do not need to do this in a coercive way. In fact, don't. Instead, call out of care and concern. If you cannot do that, the group should think seriously about your purpose. You are a community who is walking toward Jesus together. You should not be a community that judges

each other, seeing some as more committed than the others. We are all on the journey, and we all start from different places. But we can also all cross paths and walk along with each other together. Sometimes we get off track. It is helpful when we have others to help guide us back to the path.

Thank you for being willing to guide others along the journey. Remember, you don't have to have their answers. Their answers will be their own. You all will instead just listen and support one another as you walk along all your paths that lead to Christ.

Gathering #1 (if you do an introductory week)

Readings:

- (All) *Participant Guide* - Introduction, pp.xi-xvi; “Begin With the End,” pp. 11-19
- (Facilitator) *Congregation Guide* – n/a

Video:

- Introduction

Additional Work:

- Take the Gospel Discipleship Assessment either in the *Participant Guide* on p. 1-7 or at <https://www.ministrymatters.com/gospeldiscipleship>
- Send your result to your facilitator. Include both your primary and secondary types.
- If you take the assessment online and do not receive your results, check your spam or trash folder. If it still is not there, try the paper copy in the book.

At the group gathering:

Open in prayer

Watch the video together

Discuss the characteristics of a small group. Decide how regularly you want to meet. Create a group covenant to establish your commitment to each other.

Points for discussion:

- Share a time in your life when you felt like your life had significant purpose
- When have you most felt like a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- What excites you about growing in your journey of discipleship? What worries you?

Share reading assignments for next week

Share prayer requests with one another. Close in prayer

Gathering #2

Readings:

- (All) *Participant Guide* - "Episode One: Markan Discipleship," pp. 21-40
- (Facilitator) *Congregation Guide* - "Lean Into Your Type," pp. 19-20; "A Markan in a Markan Church," pp. 20-22; "A Markan in a Non-Markan Church," pp. 22-27; "Markan Strengths," pp. 44-45; "Markan Challenges," pp. 53-56.

Video:

- Markans

Open in prayer

Watch the video together

Discuss the characteristics of Markan discipleship. As the facilitator, share interesting details gleaned from the readings in the Congregation Guide.

Points for discussion:

- Invite the Markans to answer:
 - What about the description of this type of discipleship really captured who you are?
 - Are there any parts of the description that do not fit you?
 - What do you wish other discipleship types understood about you?
 - Now that you understand your discipleship in Markan terms, what next step will you take to grow in your discipleship?
- Invite others to reflect:
 - What do you love about Markan disciples?
 - How are you challenged by Markan discipleship?

Share reading assignments for next week

Share prayer requests with one another. Close in prayer

Gathering #3

Readings:

- (All) *Participant Guide* - "Episode Two: Matthean Discipleship," pp. 41-59
- (Facilitator) *Congregation Guide* - "A Matthean in a Matthean Church," pp. 27-28; "A Matthean in a Non-Matthean Church," pp. 28-31; "Matthean Strengths," pp. 46-47; "Matthean Challenges," pp. 56-59.

Video:

- Mattheans

Open in prayer

Watch the video together

Discuss the characteristics of Matthean discipleship. As the facilitator, share interesting details gleaned from the readings in the Congregation Guide.

Points for discussion:

- Invite the Mattheans to answer:
 - What about the description of this type of discipleship really captured who you are?
 - Are there any parts of the description that do not fit you?
 - What do you wish other discipleship types understood about you?
 - Now that you understand your discipleship in Matthean terms, what next step will you take to grow in your discipleship?
- Invite others to reflect:
 - What do you love about Matthean disciples?
 - How are you challenged by Matthean discipleship?

Share reading assignments for next week

Share prayer requests with one another. Close in prayer

Gathering #4

Readings:

- (All) *Participant Guide* - "Episode Three: Lukan Discipleship," pp. 61-82
- (Facilitator) *Congregation Guide* - "A Lukan in a Lukan Church," pp. 31-33; "A Lukan in a Non-Lukan Church," pp. 33-36; "Lukan Strengths," pp. 48-49; "Lukan Challenges," pp. 59-65.

Video:

- Lukans

Open in prayer

Watch the video together

Discuss the characteristics of Lukan discipleship. As the facilitator, share interesting details gleaned from the readings in the Congregation Guide.

Points for discussion:

- Invite the Lukans to answer:
 - What about the description of this type of discipleship really captured who you are?
 - Are there any parts of the description that do not fit you?
 - What do you wish other discipleship types understood about you?
 - Now that you understand your discipleship in Lukan terms, what next step will you take to grow in your discipleship?
- Invite others to reflect:
 - What do you love about Lukan disciples?
 - How are you challenged by Lukan discipleship?

Share reading assignments for next week

Share prayer requests with one another. Close in prayer

Gathering #5

Readings:

- (All) *Participant Guide* - "Episode Four: Johannine Discipleship," pp. 83-104 *Note that we are going out of order here*
- (Facilitator) *Congregation Guide* - "A Johannine in a Johannine Church," pp. 36-37; "A Johannine in a Non-Johannine Church," pp. 37-42; "Johannine Strengths," pp. 49-51; "Johannine Challenges," pp. 66-68.

Video:

- Johannines

Open in prayer

Watch the video together

Discuss the characteristics of Johannine discipleship. As the facilitator, share interesting details gleaned from the readings in the Congregation Guide.

Points for discussion:

- Invite the Johannines to answer:
 - What about the description of this type of discipleship really captured who you are?
 - Are there any parts of the description that do not fit you?
 - What do you wish other discipleship types understood about you?
 - Now that you understand your discipleship in Johannine terms, what next step will you take to grow in your discipleship?
- Invite others to reflect:
 - What do you love about Johannine disciples?
 - How are you challenged by Johannine discipleship?

Share reading assignments for next week

Share prayer requests with one another. Close in prayer

Note: in this final week, you will need to discuss with the group whether you return to traditional Sunday School material or continue meeting as a discipleship small group where you coach one another in your growth, or disband as a group.

Optional Series: Practicing Discipleship

Some of you may decide to return to other curriculum when the last of the Gospel Discipleship lessons are complete. However, some of you may want to continue meeting and reflecting intentionally on how you are growing in your discipleship. One way to do that is in the coaching model that follows this description. However, if you are doing this as a church, you might follow the Gospel Discipleship series with a sermon series centered around reacquainting yourself with your own community. We did this at my new church. It took place in the midst of the pandemic and we knew the needs and character of our community had shifted, and intentional study and reflection on that reality could help us live into our discipleship in fresh and urgent ways. We hosted webinars early in the week that gathered people in the areas of city government, education, health care, non-profits, and business to reflect on the state of our community. That provided us with a snapshot that allowed us to take what we learned and apply it to how we live our discipleship in our community.

If you take this approach, here is an intervening process to then step into becoming a discipleship group next.

Week of _____ Topic _____

Before class, watch the webinar.

When you gather for class, open in prayer.

Watch the short clip of the webinar, or watch that week's sermon.

Points for discussion:

- Having heard from the panel on this week's topic, what did you hear that breaks your heart?
- What did you hear that makes your heart sing? (i.e. what inspired you)
- How could you live out your discipleship in this situation described in our community?
- What other resources would you need to make the difference you are feeling called to make?
- What will your next step be?

Summarize what we have heard from people in this gathering.

Close in prayer, and particularly if there is a potential new ministry forming from these conversations, pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Discipleship Small Groups

Once your group has been through the initial process of reflecting on the 4 discipleship types, you can continue to stay together as a longstanding discipleship small group. The purpose is to coach each other in your discipleship, so that you continue to grow in your path toward Jesus Christ.

You may at this point want to continue to meet weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly. You should at least meet monthly, and if you only meet once a month, you might want to meet longer to make sure you work with at least half the group.

The goal of each meeting will be to walk each person through some reflection on how you are growing in your discipleship. You actually do not have to do every person each time, but make sure everyone gets time to reflect at least every couple of months. Also recognize that walking someone else through their journey of discipleship can sometimes inspire you to grow in new ways in your discipleship.

The approach is to have one person serve as the guide and one person serve as the disciple. The guide will take the disciple through the questions on the following handout. The guide can choose from the options of questions, or see where the conversation seems to be leading. The process should only last about 15 minutes per person. If the disciple is wandering, the guide can help them by inviting them to remember the goal of having one thing the person can do to grow in their discipleship as they close their conversation. Each pairing needs to close with the final questions about a goal. The whole group may be invited to share some observations or make suggestions about the disciple's goal and plan. It is possible that one of them may be inspired to join them on the journey.

It is also possible that the whole group may begin to see an emerging passion that is common to all of them. They may then want to pull together and work on something as an entire group. It may be trying a new spiritual practice together, or going on a retreat. It may be that you are seeing a recurring mission passion developing in your group, and you may want to work on that together. If some theme is rising up, pay attention to that. Then you can, at least for a season, shift your attention to that work. Then return to reflecting on your discipleship, first processing as a group the collective experience you had, then returning to the guide-disciple reflection.

The sheet below is for your use through the individual reflection. The facilitator of the group does not always have to be the guide. In fact, it might be most helpful to rotate that spot out, unless someone (or a couple people) seems to be clearly gifted in that role. Remember that someone needs to guide that guide through their own reflection too, though.

Guide – Disciple Coaching Questions

What is your Gospel Discipleship type?

Do you feel like your type still fits you? (If yes, proceed. If not, ask why. Then you may conclude this session with a goal of retaking the assessment)

How have you intentionally grown in your discipleship since we heard from you last?

Or

How have you grown in the realms of:

- Spiritual formation?
- Worship?
- Service?
- Witness?

How do you need to grow in those 4 realms?

What is breaking your heart right now? Or what is making your heart sing right now?

How could you express your discipleship to enter into those things breaking your heart or making your heart sing?

What goal do you have to grow in your discipleship in the next few weeks?

What is the first step you need to make toward achieving that goal?