

Defining the Discipleship Method

This book provides the format for a discipling relationship between a more mature believer and a newer Christian. In Matthew 28:17 Jesus commanded us to "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 things that I have commanded you." The successful spread of Christianity throughout this world requires that every believer assumes the responsibility of making disciples. Those of us who have been grounded in the faith must make a commitment to disciple those who are newly converted. Most of us can easily say "yes" to this calling in our own hearts but we often feel a lack of confidence in how to begin and what direction to take with those we would like to help.

The Foundation Stones discipleship manual makes this simple. Each week provides a clear comprehensive coverage of a subject vital to providing a spiritual foundation in the new believers life. The subject material and the related homework assignment becomes the ground for our weekly meetings. However, what actually takes place goes beyond just study and discussion. As the weeks progress, friendships deepen and the new Christian develops an informal accountability relationship with the more mature believer that is helping him. During the weekly meetings the one discipling is looking for any personal needs or struggles in the new believer's life that may need prayer or direction, thereby providing the care and help necessary during the early months of being established in the Lord. At the end of the fifteen weeks you have not only helped make a disciple, but very likely have helped train someone who will soon be involved in discipling others. As the years go by you have the joy of knowing that the time and care you gave brought spiritual growth and fruitfulness to many lives.

Understanding the Terms

In this introduction we will be using the terms "discipler," "disciple" and "discipleship." These terms are to be understood in the following way:

1. Discipler: The person who is guiding, instructing and helping in the care and tutoring of another.
2. Disciple: The person who is being helped, instructed and tutored.
3. Discipleship: The process of being helped, instructed and tutored.

* The terms "discipler," "disciple" and "discipleship" may not be understood by the new believer. If they are used they should be explained. We use them because they are Biblical and we assume that those using this book understand their definition.

Qualifications

This method of discipleship is both simple and effective. All that is really required is that the person who is doing the discipling is a sincere caring Christian.

Spiritual maturity is an advantage but not necessarily a requirement. Even a young Christian (six months or older) can be effective in discipling a new believer using this book as a guide. We base this position on what we see regarding discipleship in the early church and the success we have witnessed when even young Christians have reached out in love and commitment to others.

If this method of personal discipling of new believers is being used as an organized program in a local church, the pastor can define the qualifications of those doing the discipling and even offer any additional training he feels necessary. One recommended method would be to select a group of men and women who will commit themselves to disciple new ones and dedicate fifteen weeks to going through the Foundation Stones manual and completing the homework themselves. After this familiarization and training time they begin to disciple others. Christian Equippers also offers "The Complete Life Course" for discipling groups of new members in the local church.

Additional training can be an advantage but it is not necessary in order to be successful. The simple format of a more mature caring Christian meeting regularly with a new believer using the material of this book is enough for success.

How to Begin the Discipleship Relationship

1. The discipler (one discipling the new believer) approaches the potential disciple (one being disciplined) and proposes a discipling relationship (reading material and meeting weekly).
 2. The discipler explains the advantage of going through Foundation Stones together with the one being disciplined.
- * The advantage is that every believer should understand those subjects foundational to spiritual growth. It is also very advantageous to have a more mature Christian to help you with questions, concerns and prayer through the formative months as a new believer.
3. The discipler should explain what is required of the disciple during the fifteen weeks.
 - A. Both must have a copy of Foundation Stones.
 - B. They agree to meet weekly and establish a convenient time.
 - C. The discipler explains the homework assignment at the end of each chapter.
 - D. The discipler invites the disciple to call or contact him with any needs that come up.
 - E. The discipler commits himself to pray for the disciple during the next 15 weeks.
 - F. The discipler reviews the subject and homework before each weekly session.

How to Conduct a Discipleship Session

1. The discipler should begin the session with friendly conversation with the intention of establishing an informal atmosphere.
2. Before beginning to discuss the weekly subject or the homework the discipler can open with prayer asking for God's blessing on the disciple and the time together.
3. Begin to discuss the disciple's answers to the homework assignment point by point. The discipler should be sensitive to any areas of confusion or question on the part of the disciple and address them immediately.
4. If other issues of concern related to the disciple's life arise, take time to address these, giving them the time they need depending upon their significance. It is more important to address critical situations than it is to complete the homework discussion. The homework can be discussed later if necessary.
5. Take opportunity to open the Bible and discuss any scriptures related to the homework or the person's need. This familiarizes the disciple with the word of God and builds the habit of referring to the Bible for answers.
6. At the end of the homework discussion ask the disciple if there are any questions that he has concerning the subject just studied. Answer these as well as you can. If you do not know the answer tell him that you will get help yourself and come with an answer in the next week's session.
7. Close with prayer directed toward any needs or concerns that have emerged during your time together.

Important Note

The goal of this discipleship time is to establish the new believer in foundational teachings, in a relationship with Jesus Christ, and in a commitment with a local church. If the discipler discovers a lack of commitment on the part of the one being disciplined, you should address the concerns that you have. If the disciple displays a lack of sincerity or commitment to serving the Lord or being disciplined, it is recommended that the discipler terminate the discipleship relationship, suggesting that it resume at a later time when there is a greater commitment. The discipler should not spend his time working with those that are insincere when it can be spent with those that are. This also avoids the discouragement and weariness that naturally affects us when we are laboring with those that are not really serious about the things of God.

* This course is primarily designed for one on one discipleship, even though it can be modified to include more. Should a local church desire to conduct a group discipleship or new member class, we highly recommend the Complete Life Class produced by Christian Equippers International. This ten week class has proven to

be an extremely effective means of grounding new believers, as well as building new relationships as they become members of the church. For more information on the Complete Life Class, please contact the CEI office toll free; 1-800-662-0909 and request a free promotional video.