



DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

# DISCIPLESHIP GROUP





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# Introduction

The gospels record a special connection between Jesus and three of His followers – Peter, John, and James. Together they join Jesus in some of His most intimate moments: times of tender ministry (Luke 8:51), supernatural encounter (Luke 9:28), painful vulnerability (Mark 14:33), and complete obedience (John 14:15). This connection prepared these three to be key leaders among early Jesus-followers.

Jesus' disciple-making practices were lived out in a relationship with His "D-Group", Peter, John, and James, as well as the 12 and the 72. Jesus taught them, sent them out and "debriefed" their experiences with them. He continually revealed who He was to them and drew them into His circle of friends (John 15:15) teaching them everything God, His father had taught Him. Jesus also gave His disciples His final and all-encompassing mandate in Matthew 28:18–20 (ESV)

*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, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Jesus made it clear that He had the authority to send out His disciples and that His authority would accompany them in their disciple-making. In His commission to us, Jesus gave us our primary mandate as a church and as His followers, “make disciples”. How? By teaching everyone in every nation to do what Jesus did and live and Jesus lived.

Today, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, this intimate connection to Jesus is available to all of Jesus’ followers. With this in mind, Willingdon Church invites men and women to form **Discipleship Groups (D-Groups)**.

A Discipleship Group is a **peer-based, same-gender** group of 2-5 people (possibly part of the same Life Group; 3 is ideal) who want to be intentional about their growth and perseverance as disciples of Jesus. Like Jesus’ “inner circle,” these groups meet together in the presence of Jesus to share:

- their moments of encounter with God (**Meeting with Jesus**),
- their places of personal vulnerability and struggle (**Walking with Jesus**),
- their opportunities for ministry to others (**Leading others to Jesus**).

## PEER-BASED LEADERSHIP

Peer-to-peer discipleship is a reproducible process that anyone can engage in. Peer-based Discipleship Groups use the simple template provided in this guide to engage in God’s Word, reflect on their lives, confess sin, take steps to grow in holiness, and follow the Spirit’s leading to reach outside of themselves.

This method is a conversation geared toward working on character formation: the questions participants ask of one another become the process that help facilitate discipleship. The key to peer-to-peer discipleship is not to try to do too much at once: engage with God, ask questions of one another, and respond to God’s leading. Once a

peer-to-peer discipleship group reaches five people, members should begin looking toward multiplication into more than one group.

All participants take responsibility for the group's success. Group members make covenantal commitments to meet, care for each other, and follow-up with each other. While assignments may be taken on by individual group members regarding group logistics, the success of the group depends on the engagement and ownership of the group by all group members.

Discipleship Groups form based on seven commitments:

## COMMITMENTS

- 1. Purpose:** We submit together to the purpose of growing, persevering, and multiplying as disciples of Jesus. In a discipleship group, our social connection is only the beginning; we measure the value of our meeting by how it fuels our love for Jesus and for people (see Matthew 22:34-38), trains us for godliness (see 1 Timothy 4:8), leads us to abandon any allegiance that rivals Jesus (i.e. idols), and leads others to follow Jesus.
- 2. Availability:** Except in emergencies, we will attend every meeting we schedule together. This may be as frequent as once a week but should be no less than once a month. We can expect an immediate follow up if we miss a meeting.
- 3. Confidentiality:** We will be trustworthy for one another, never sharing with others the confidential things we discuss, unless we are given permission, or it involves the immediate harm of a vulnerable person.
- 4. Vulnerability/Truthfulness:** Seeking maximum self-awareness, we will trust each other with ourselves, sharing our worst parts just as much as our best parts. We will speak honestly and share the whole truth as best we know it; withholding important truth is no better than lying.

**5. Loving Accountability:** In a spirit of love, we give each other permission to give and receive encouragement, exhortation, and correction from one another. We are committed to guarding one another's integrity as fiercely as we guard our own, and to walking alongside one another as we take responsibility for our actions.

**6. Obedience:** We will support each other in growing our obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit and personal alignment with God's word.

**7. Spirit-led Multiplication:** We will commit to the leading of others in their growth as disciples of Christ as the Spirit leads. We recognize that Christ calls all of His followers to make disciples of others.



# DISCIPLESHIP GROUP COVENANT

Today: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ (mm/dd/yyyy)

To the best of our ability, we agree to uphold these commitments to one another, within the following parameters:

We will meet every \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_ : \_\_\_ am/pm.

Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

We will renew or revise our commitment to one another on \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ (mm/dd/yyyy)

Signatures:

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

X \_\_\_\_\_

Name	Phone	Email

# Beginning Well

We recommend the following approach to begin well together.

## FIRST MEETING

**Purpose:** Get to know one another's story and establish a climate of support and encouragement.

- After a few minutes of general connection, go over the commitments above together. Take a few minutes to express your own hopes for the role of the group in your walk with Jesus.
- Take 5-10 min each to share the short version of your faith story. Share some key *turning points, mentors, decisions, and/or priorities* that led you to become a Christ-follower and shape your self-understanding.
- Share something that you are anticipating in the coming week about which you are ( 1 ) excited, ( 2 ) anxious, ( 3 ) potentially vulnerable to stumbling, and ( 4 ) called to be obedient in following the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Review the structure for the second meeting, which will require some preparation (below).
- Agree on a meeting schedule and sign the group covenant above.
- Pray for one another and invite God to use these meetings to work His will in your lives

# SECOND MEETING

**Purpose:** Establish a climate of vulnerability and truth-telling.

- Now is the time to set a norm for vulnerability and trust together!
- After a brief time of check-in/catch-up, review the commitments above.
- Briefly touch base regarding the areas that were shared in the previous meeting (excited, anxious, vulnerable, and obedient). How did things turn out for you this week?
- Next, each member takes 10-15 minutes each, uninterrupted, to share their answers to the following questions. As each group member shares, the other group members should listen carefully, and note anything that they would like to follow up with a question or comment.
  - *How would you describe the state of your personal relationship with Christ in this season?*
  - *What 5 words describe the person you desire to be/become?*
  - *What are the top 2-3 challenges that you are currently facing, that, if addressed, would make the greatest positive difference in your relationship with God or others in your life?*
  - *If the evil one sought your downfall and Christ's discredit through you, what area of your life would be the most strategic target right now? What would be the consequences if he were to be successful?*
  - *What is the greatest obedience challenge?*
- At the end of a member's sharing time, the other members should share 1-2 insights, observations, encouragements, or questions that emerge from what they have heard.
- Pray for one another, with specific attention to what has been shared.

- Review and agree on the three “movements” on the next page (or develop your own) as a typical meeting structure.
- Confirm the date, time, and location of your next meeting.

## SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS

**Purpose:** Nurture an environment of vulnerability, trust, support, and truth-telling.

- After a brief time of check-in/catch-up, review the commitments you have made to each other.
- Follow the recommended three-movement structure provided on the next page, followed by a time of prayer for each other.
- Periodically allow time to evaluate your group’s effectiveness together (suggestions on the next page).
- Share your cell #s with each other so you can text encouraging words or prayer requests.

# Movements

Once you have established your group, there are three recommended “movements” to a typical regular 60-90-minute D-group meeting

## **FIRST MOVEMENT: Meeting with Jesus (15-20 Minutes)**

- He took Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. (Luke 9:28)
- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another. (Colossians 3:16)
- My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27)

### **Share how you have heard from God in the past week.**

Bring your Bible and come prepared to share one of the ways that you have heard from God in your daily Bible reading, prayer, silence, and solitude in the past week, guided by the following questions.

1. How has God’s word to you fueled a greater *love for Christ*, assurance of your *identity in Christ*, *distaste for sin* and *desire for holiness*, and/or *love for others*?
2. How has God’s word to you provided *direction*, *perspective*, or *correction* for your present circumstances?
3. In the coming week, how should you *respond* to and/or *obey* what you have heard?

We encourage the group to adopt a common reading plan together. For daily Bible reading, we suggest Willingdon Church's **Bible Reading Journal**. They are available in the lobby ministry stands. If you have never used this approach, Willingdon Church offers periodic Life Journaling workshops. Attend one together! Questions? Please email [discipleship@willingdon.org](mailto:discipleship@willingdon.org)

## **SECOND MOVEMENT: Walking with Jesus (20-30 Minutes)**

- He took with Him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. (Mark 14:33)
- Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. (James 5:16)
- If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

### **Spend time confessing sin and confessing the faith.**

**Confessing Sin:** Share with one another the ways you have faced and or succumbed to the temptation to sin against God or others in the past week. The questions provided below are a helpful tool for examination of conscience together. In each case, be specific, help each other to not only address the fruit/symptom(s), but also the false beliefs (*Who am I? What has God done? Who is God?*) that drive that behavior.

Since we have last met, in your life...

1. What signs of growth in knowing Jesus personally, in your delight in God, understanding of biblical truth and/or in Christ-like character (Gal. 5:23-24) do you observe?
2. How effective are your current spiritual habits/rhythms for helping

you to grow in your love for God and others? Does anything need to change? Are your spiritual habits increasing your humility? (Luke 4:42, 6:13)

3. What threatens the work of Christ in and through you? How have you dealt with your “shadow side” (character defects<sup>1</sup>, escapes/drugs of choice<sup>2</sup>, fears and anxieties, and/or impure/idolatrous motives)? (Romans 7:14-24)
4. Has your behavior toward others reflected the sacrificial love and reconciling forgiveness of God toward you? Is there any relationship that needs attention (forgiveness or making amends)? (Matthew 5:23-24)
5. How have you addressed any battles with sexual temptation? What might help in the coming week? (1 Corinthians 6:18)
6. How are you generously, honestly, and contentedly stewarding the time, talent, and treasure that God has given you? Are you growing in your generosity and obedience to Christ’s teaching? (Romans 12:3-8)
7. Where are you most vulnerable to discouragement, fatigue, despair, temptation, or spiritual attack right now? What self-care is needed to restore physical, emotional, relational, and/or spiritual wholeness? (Luke 18:1; John 14:1; Gal 6:9; Ephesians 3:13)
8. Is there anything about which you have not been completely honest, that you’re hoping we won’t ask about, or that you’re afraid to share with the group? (James 5:16)

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<sup>1</sup>Defects of character are prevailing attitudes, inclinations, vulnerabilities, areas of brokenness that are the “root” cause of destructive and consequential sinful behaviors, e.g. blaming, judgmental, sarcasm. (Freedom Session)

<sup>2</sup>Drugs of Choice are “things or behaviors we run to when life gets hard, e.g. food, affirmation, alcohol, sex, work, TV, etc.” (Freedom Session)

9. Considering what you have brought into the light today, what step(s) do you need to take in the coming week to bring your heart and life into alignment with God's best for you?

10. Is there a step of obedience the Holy Spirit is prompting you to take this week? Where is the Lord asking you to be courageous in applying your faith? Are you following Christ with expectancy in His presence and leading?

**Confessing the Faith:** After sin has been confessed, spend time speaking out loud to one another the good news of Jesus Christ and His work for us, with specific attention to replacing the identified false beliefs with the corresponding truth (*Who am I? What has God done? Who is God?*). Hearing the Gospel spoken out loud enables us to believe that the Gospel is good news for us, today!



### **THIRD MOVEMENT: Leading Others to Jesus (20-30 Minutes)**

- And when He came to the house [where the girl had died], He allowed no one to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James... (Luke 8:51)
- Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. (1 Peter 3:15)
- Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel. (Ephesians 6:19)

#### **Share and pray for anticipated opportunities to help people follow Jesus.**

How is the Holy Spirit leading you to invest in the lives of others to guide them to follow Jesus with great faith and obedience? Is there a specific person the Spirit is prompting you to connect with?

*Share and pray for anticipated opportunities  
to connect people far from God  
with the life-changing power of Jesus Christ.*

Talk about how your relationship and spiritual conversations have gone with those in your life who are far from God or who are struggling to trust the Gospel for themselves.

Share how you hope to share the Gospel with this person and/or invite them into the Christian community.

## ON OUR KNEES: (10-15 Minutes)

Using the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) as a guide and based on what has come to the surface in your sharing together, lift one another to God in prayer.

WORSHIP	
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,	Express your thanks and praise to your heavenly Father for His work in your lives.
PETITION	
your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread,	Invite God to be King in the various areas of your life, as well as for practical needs, people far from God, the church's mission and its leadership.
CONFESSION	
and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.	Repent of any sin, express forgiveness regarding any broken relationship, and ask for God's help in bringing reconciliation wherever it is needed.
ENGAGEMENT	
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.	Ask God to lead, protect, and heal you wherever it is needed. Give time to listen and respond to the Spirit's voice.
WORSHIP	
For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.	Close by praising God for who He is, and for anticipated opportunities and answers to prayer.

# RE-GROUPING: PERIODIC EVALUATION

Every 8-10 weeks improve the quality of your group's experience with a discussion about the following questions:

- How has this D-Group been helpful for your apprenticeship to Jesus? What would have been helpful?
- Each member asks: How could I improve my side of this relationship? Is there anything I am doing (or not doing) that is standing in the way of this group's impact on your life?
- What could we do in subsequent meetings to take our relationship and discipleship to the next level?
- What is something we've learned together that could be transferable to others, and how can we share it?
- When do we anticipate multiplying, and what is our plan to facilitate this?

Identify 1-2 take-aways that you can begin to implement at your next meeting.

# CELEBRATION, TRANSITION & MULTIPLICATION

- Every 4-6 months go out for a great meal and spend time celebrating what God has done in your lives in the past season.
- Every 12 months discuss together the future of your group. Give each person an opportunity to determine whether they will remain with the group in the next season, “multiply” by starting a new group, or some other path. Based on your decision together, pray for one another and/or renew your commitment for another season.

When might it be time to ***multiply?***

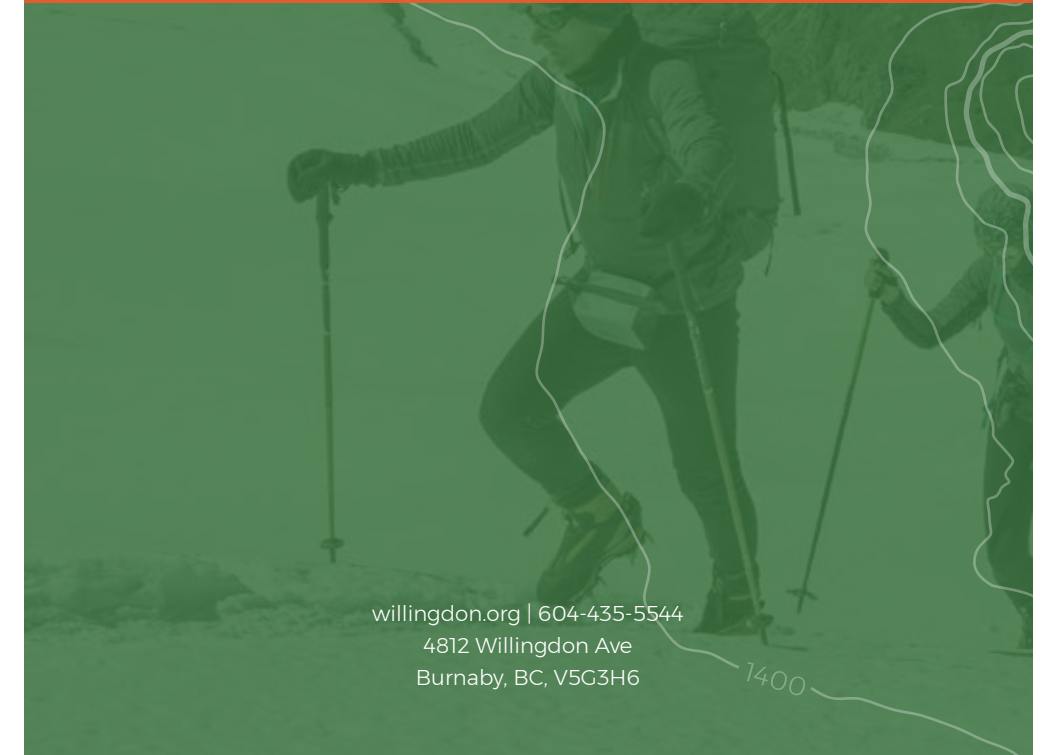
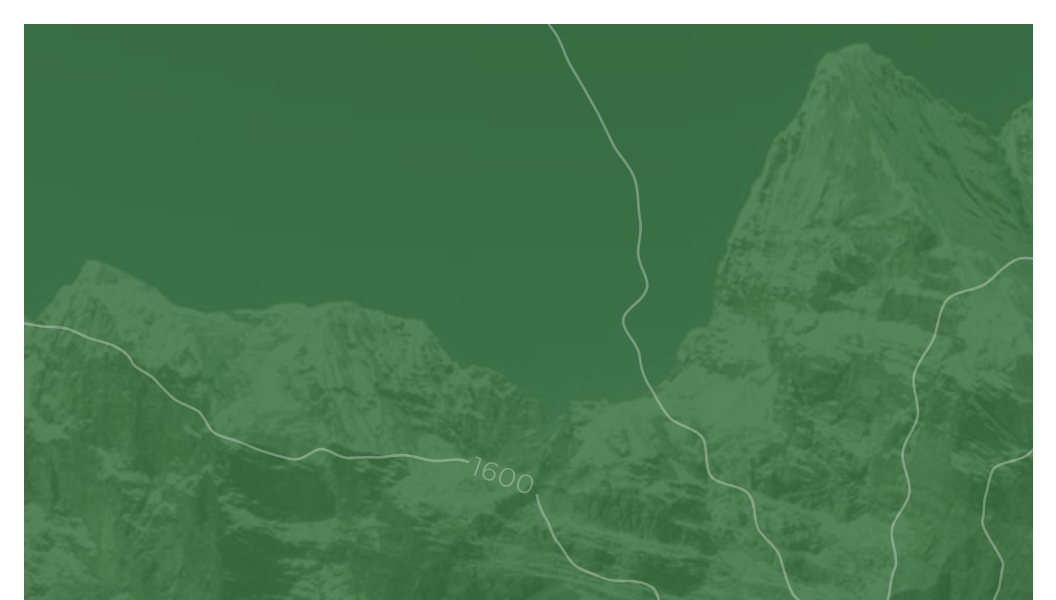
- When group membership is changing naturally, e.g. someone is moving or can no longer attend. The inevitable change in dynamics will be similar to beginning a new group anyway.
- When members’ participation in the group has established a degree of spiritual and emotional health and stability (i.e. less vulnerable to immediate failure).
- When one or more members of the group become aware of others who would benefit from participating in a discipleship group.
- When the Holy Spirit makes it clear!

*It is my prayer that your [plural - all of you] love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

(Philippians 1:9-11)







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