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# Step by step guidelines for one-to-one discipleship

By Julie Moser

This free resource is designed to equip individuals to disciple another person in the Christian faith. Please note the following considerations:

1. It is advisable that discipleship is done by a more mature Christian and of the same gender of the person they meet with.
2. When meeting with a minor please make sure that you follow the child safety protocols set by the church, institution or organization you may be representing.
3. These guidelines are not designed for meeting with children (ages 12 or younger). Discipleship of youth ages 13-17 is preferable in a small group setting where possible.

## Step by step guidelines for one-to-one discipleship

An important distinction to make from the start is the difference between being a mentor and being a discipler. Discipleship is teaching someone to follow Jesus. Mentoring is broader and is generally aimed at equipping people with specific skills (for example, a person could be mentored in a business setting to be better at their job.)

### What you will need:

1. A Bible
2. A pen and planner/calendar/diary

### What to do when you meet to disciple someone

There are three main things you need to do to disciple someone [below each category are some suggested times for how long each one should take. The times are not a rule, just a guideline]:

**1. Talk** [20mins] Discipleship involves relationship so start by finding out how they are. You don't want to launch straight into a Bible study only to find out they are in pain a tragedy or are stressed because of study or work. Start by asking:

A. how is your day going so far?

B. how has the last week been?

Find out how their Christian life is going (Spend most of your talk time on this):

C. ask "how are you doing in your Christian life?" Ask them how they are doing with resisting sin, godly living, godly actions, personal Bible devotions, prayer, church participation etc. Be sure that this question is not limited to the frequency in which they read the Bible – people often interpret this question this way - you could be reading your Bible but not living it out by treating people poorly or living selfishly etc.

**2. Read the Bible** [30mins] there are several options for this.

OPTION A. You can use Bible study booklets – there is a range of Bible study material available. This can be a good way to get started because it keeps you focussed. It can also be helpful if you are not confident to simply read through a text and teach it. This is a good way to get started before moving to the next option.

OPTION B. Choose a book of the Bible and read through it section by section or one chapter at a time. Make sure you have the same version (I prefer NIV), just make sure it is one with modern language and one that you are comfortable with. Ask them to do the reading if they are able. Once you read it together ask them: "what stood out to you in this passage?" Allow them to make observations or ask questions. Then work through the passage and teach them some helpful things from what was read – this means you will want to come with some prepared notes. Finish by asking "what challenges does the passage give you for the week ahead?" Then give them some suggestions about how the passage applies to how we should live/respond.

OPTION C. Similar to OPTION B, you might want to set a topic and come with a set of readings each week on the topic. For example the topic might be godly relationships or a theological topic such as the sovereignty of God. When doing it this way you will want to set a time limit such as 4 weeks.

**3. Pray** [10mins] Ask them what they want to pray for and spend time praying. Two important things about this time:

A. You want them to become comfortable praying if they are not already. So while you will always pray for them, insist that they pray for one or some of the prayer points. If they have never prayed aloud or feel uneasy explain to them that this is best setting to learn how to pray and that it doesn't matter if they get their words mixed up. If it is really difficult set some things for them to thank God for and have them simply pray "Thank you, Lord for....[insert praise points]"

B. You want to equip them to be praying on their own during the week. I like to ask them to come up with a list of five things they should pray for every day and I ask them each week how they are doing with praying through their list. I will also help them with suggestions of what to pray for if they have never done this. Some obvious ones are: Family members, faith for a non-Christian friend, their church leaders, something for themselves. NOTE: these are things to ask God for, but teach them to start by giving thanks too (for example, thanks for: who God is, the ways God has blessed them or others, for answered prayer etc.)

### Your first meeting

Start your time together by making your expectations and commitment clear. I always do this the very first time I meet with someone. This is also a good time to get to know them a little bit and will help you decide what you want to do in regards to Bible reading.

Step 1. Your first time meeting you need to find out about them.

-Ask them to share their 'story' with you (family, growing up, church experience etc.).

-Get them to share their testimony if that does not come out clearly.

-Ask them about the times when they were strongest in their faith and times when they have struggled.

-I like to clarify how well they understand the gospel. A great question I always ask is: "If you were to die today and stand before God and he asked you 'why should I let you into my heaven?', what would you say to him? If their answer revolves around what Jesus has done for them on the cross that is great. If their answer revolves around how much they feel they try to be good or try to have faith then spend some time explaining the gospel. Some helpful verses may be: John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10; 2 Corinthians 5:21. Be sure to talk about not only the fact that Jesus takes away our sin but that he, at the same time, credited his righteousness to us (people often miss the second bit!)

Step 2. Tell them what you will do when you meet together (talk about their faith, read the Bible and pray.) Tell them your goal is to help them follow Jesus - to make them strong in their faith and their understanding of scripture.

Step 3. Ask them to make a commitment to meeting regularly. They need to make it a priority (and so will you). There may be unavoidable times when your meeting time has to move (example, illness) but try to be consistent.

Step 4. Ask them if there is anything they would like in addition to this? (You won't necessarily guarantee that what they ask you will do unless it fits in with the three points above (talk, Bible, pray). For example, they may confess they are struggling with a particular sin and want you to keep them accountable by asking them each week - that's a YES. They may say they want you to help them understand their Old Testament better so can you start with an OT book - that's a YES. They may say they want someone to do social things with such as go to the movies or teach them to cook - that's a NO. (You may develop a relationship where you do social things outside of your time together but it should not be a set expectation and should not affect the time you set aside.)

Step 5. Set a time and day that you will start meeting regularly (if you haven't already.)

Step 6. Read a short Bible passage and pray. Choose a Bible passage that will be helpful or encouraging. One suggestion is Hebrews 10:19-25.

Step 7. Decide how long you will meet for (one week? Four weeks? A term/semester? A school year?) You can still continue regularly after the initial time you have set, but it is helpful to have a finish date in case you feel you have committed to something that is not working well for either of you. The time limit also forces you to persevere even if it is not working at first. It gives you a settling in time before either of you end it prematurely - sometimes it takes time for it to feel comfortable.

### **Big mistakes people make in discipling**

1. All talk and no Bible and prayer. Discipleship is not merely friendship and you are not their therapist. Make sure that what you set out to do happens – that the person you meet with is disciplined in the faith.

2. Random meeting times. You need to set the same time every week and stick to it. Best option: once a week, second best/acceptable: every second week, not an option: whenever the person feels they need someone to talk to. The most common thing I hear from people is that they start regularly and then everyone becomes "too busy". A set, regular time will keep you accountable. It is helpful to end each time confirming the next meeting time before you pray and write it in the planner/calendar/diary before you part ways.

3. No time limit. This is not a huge mistake, but it is best to set an hour. This helps you stick to the important stuff and not wander off topic. You can continue to meet and catch up after the hour is done but having an official end time is helpful.

### **Some helpful Bible passages**

-Criteria for leaders: 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9.

-Examples of discipleship from the Bible: Jesus with the 12 disciples (Matthew 5:1-2, Mark 3:13-19); Priscilla and Aquila with Apollos (Acts 18:24-26); Paul with Timothy (Acts 16:1-5; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:2; 2 Timothy 1:1-5, 13; 2 Timothy 3:14), with Titus (Titus 1:4), with Onesimus (Philemon 10).

-Discipleship: Matthew 7:21; 12:48-50, 16:24; Luke 9:57-62; John 14:15, 23.