

Dave is a pastor and church planter with the Evangelical Covenant Church and through wrestling with the discipling process has developed the following seven-step material to help new Christians begin their walk with the Lord Jesus. This material is built around the Navigator Wheel Illustration and thus follows the same basic pattern as the Discipleship Encounters.

This material is designed to be used in small groups but may be used by an individual if there is no one else to meet with.

Seven-Session Discipleship

By

Dave A. Rasmussen RevRazz@aol.com

November 1997

So what is discipleship anyway?

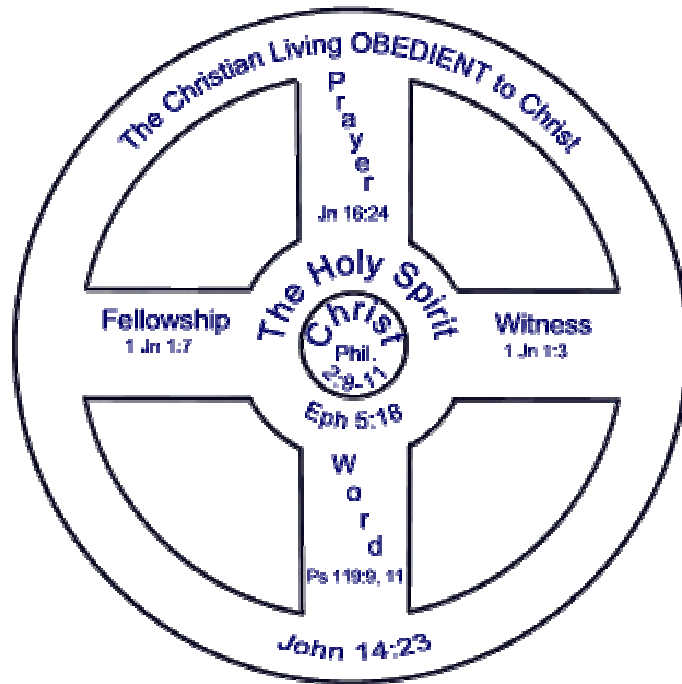
Christian discipleship is "the Christian's lifelong commitment to the person, teachings, and spirit of Jesus Christ."

So where does one start in this "lifelong process?" One approach is to hand a person a Bible and say "good luck!" Another approach, which is more personal and effective, is for a small group, or even a pair of people to look together at the "basics" of discipleship. The goal of this material is to encourage these kinds of small group gatherings. The ultimate goal is for individuals who have been "students" in the discipleship process to become "teachers" of others who are ready to learn of Christ.

An example of this process taking place in the Bible is described in II Timothy 2:2. It follows the principle that healthy Christians receive from godly people, and in turn share with others. An analogy describing this principle of receiving and giving is from the land of the Bible. The Sea of Galilee is healthy because it receives fresh water, and has an outlet. It is full of fish and sea life. The Dead Sea, in comparison, receives fresh water, but has no outlet. Like its name indicates, it contains no life. It is hoped that you will share with others as you grow as a disciple.

These "Basics of Discipleship" focus on learning the essential teachings of the Christian faith through a seven session format. Each session will focus on one event in the New Testament of the Bible, which will focus on one central theme of the Christian faith. The goal is to let your Bible do the talking through that story, and to use a few key questions to help you shape your understanding about that theme. You will also be memorizing a corresponding Bible verse to help you remember the central principle of the Bible passage.

As you learn these seven "basics" of Christian discipleship you will be building a foundation that will prepare you for a life of following Jesus and learning from the Bible. These seven "basics" are tied together through the illustration of the "Wheel," which will serve as a handy memory tool for you and for the others you disciple.



See the blank Wheel at end of this material for teaching and review purposes.

Session One

An Encounter with Jesus

Central to Christianity is the person Jesus Christ, which is why we have placed him at the "hub" of the wheel. When Jesus walked this earth, nearly 2000 years ago, there were numerous opinions about him. The Bible records many statements about Jesus made by others, but the most important for Christians is how Jesus described himself and his mission. One such account is recorded in a conversation with a religious leader named Nicodemus. It is recorded in John 3:1-15. Read it together out loud.

Questions:

1. From verse 2, what do we know about Nicodemus's opinion about Jesus?

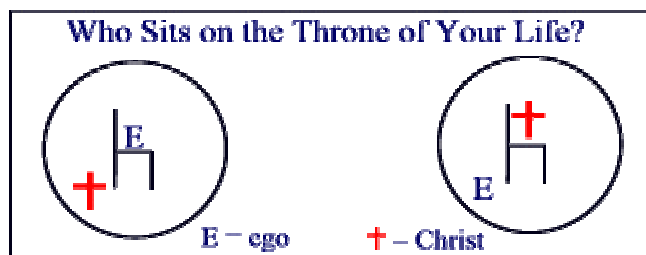
2. Jesus immediately began emphasizing the need to be "born again" or "born not just of the flesh, but also the spirit." This was difficult for Nicodemus to understand because of his focus on physical birth. Can you think of examples of "rebirth" from the world of nature? Can you think of a time you have needed a "new beginning" in your life?

3. Believing was a barrier for Nicodemus in his conversation with Jesus. What are some spiritual teachings or ideas which have been difficult for you to believe?

4. In verses 14 and 15, Jesus refers to himself as "the Son of Man," and links believing in him with receiving eternal life. What do you think Jesus was saying about who he was and his mission in this verse?

5. John 3:16, 17 are some of the best-known verses in the Bible. If you have not already done so, memorize them this week. God loves the world, but he also loves you individually. Insert your name each place it states "the world" and read it out loud. How does hearing this make you feel? How do you believe a person can know if he/she has been "born again?"

6. Jesus invited those who would believe in him to be his followers. Those who would follow Jesus and learn of him and his teachings are called disciples, which is another word for "student" or "learner." As followers of Jesus, the Bible instructs us to make Jesus our Lord (King).



This means making Jesus the most important aspect of our life--more important than our pride, possessions, relationships or dreams. (opportunity to use the "throne illustration") In John 19:38-42, we read how Nicodemus' growing commitment to Jesus gave him the courage to take

a significant risk. Read the passage out loud. How did Nicodemus display his commitment to Jesus? What risks come with following Jesus as Lord today?"

7. Jesus invites you to believe fully in him and to become his disciple. If you are not currently reading the Bible, begin with the book of Mark and read one chapter each day. In sixteen days you will have finished this record of Jesus' life and the many challenges he gave to those who would be his followers.

Session 2

Empowered by the Holy Spirit

The story of Jesus' ministry on earth is also the story of the lack of faith of the twelve disciples and their frequent failures. Jesus promised his first followers that when he returned to his Father he would send the Holy Spirit to guide and empower those who believed in him.

Undoubtedly, this was an encouragement to Peter. With all his effort he tried not to fail Jesus. But it seemed like he was always saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, and when it counted the most he lacked the courage to stand up for Jesus. The second chapter of Acts describes the transformation that took place in the life of Peter and the other disciples when they became filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Read together Acts 2:1-41.

1. The Holy Spirit came with power on the Jewish holiday of Pentecost. How was this described in verses 2 and 3.

2. God's Spirit enabled Jesus' followers to do what they were not able to do on their own strength. Describe other events of that morning from verses 4-13.

3. Jesus had told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would bring glory to him. What specific statements did Peter make emphasizing the central importance of Jesus in verses 22-33.

4. In verse 33, Peter proclaimed that God had "poured out" his Holy Spirit. Describe from verses 37-42 the audience's response which would indicate that the Holy Spirit had filled Peter to "overflowing" so much so that God's Spirit "spilled" onto those who were listening.

5. The promise Jesus made to his disciples about how they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit is found in Acts 1:8. Memorize this verse this week. It summarizes the principle that only through the help and power of the Holy Spirit can we faithfully live for Jesus in all that we do and all that we say. In this verse, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth represent the ever widening circles in which we can live for Christ.

In your own life, focus first on your family members and your closest friends as your arena in which you can represent Christ. As time proceeds be ready to be surprised as you are given new circles of people with whom you can share your love for Christ. List in two columns below, first the personal concerns in your life where you need the Holy Spirit's empowerment, and second, ways in which you need the Holy Spirit's help in your relationships with others.

6. As you include these concerns on your personal prayer list, pray for God to fill you with his Spirit to empower you and fill you with his love so fully that it will "spill" onto other people.

Session 3

Knowing God's Word

A challenge for every disciple of Jesus is how to stand strong against various kinds of temptations. In Luke 4:1-13 we read how Jesus faced a period of temptation, and what gave him strength to stand strong. Read the passage together.

1. Jesus entered into the desert and went 40 days without eating any food.

Do you remember a time when you were especially hungry? What are you hungry for in your life right now?

2. Describe the kind of temptations Jesus faced and what do you think might have made them appealing?

3. With each temptation Jesus faced he responded by quoting from the part of the Bible that is our Old Testament. What effect did this have on the devil?

4. If the devil had three "shots" at you, what three temptations might he use? (Question from the Serendipity Bible)

5. With God's Spirit at work in our life, and his Word, the Bible engraved in our memory, we can follow Jesus' example and stand strong against temptation. Since we don't usually have a Bible in our hand the very moment we face temptation, it is important to memorize verses that will help us when we face Satan's temptations. Our verse to memorize this week is Psalm 119:11 which reminds us of the power of God's Word. Read it together for encouragement along with I Corinthians 10:13. What do these verse mean to you?

6. At the back of many Bibles is a subject index or a concordance, which lists alphabetically the key words found in a Bible verse. Use it together to find a verse that can help you to stand strong against one of the temptations listed in question number four.

Session 4

Learning to Pray

As the disciples observed how Jesus lived, they noticed a particular habit that left a deep impression upon them. Jesus consistently set time aside to

pray. Noting how naturally it seemed to him, they asked Jesus to teach them to pray. This incident, including Jesus' response is found in Luke 11:1-13. Read it together.

1. Can you remember praying as a young child? If so, what do you remember about those prayers?

2. What do you think motivated the disciples to ask Jesus to teach them how to pray?

3. Jesus' response contains two stories. In each one, what do you believe he is trying to teach the disciples about prayer? Also, what do you think is the importance of the promise he gives in verses 9 and 10?

4. Verses 2-4 contains Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer. (Matthew's version is the more familiar version. It is found in Matt. 6:9-13.). It serves both as a model prayer, and also can be a guide to what can be included in our prayers. List the requests and specific words of honor Jesus used in this prayer. Evaluate how the ideas this prayer contains can guide us in our own prayers.

5. Philippians 4:6-7, is a great verse to help us remember the power of prayer. Memorize it this week. What does it say about the issues of peace and anxiety?

6. Commit yourself this week to praying 4-6 minutes each day, preferably at the same time of the day. List some issues both you and others are facing below, and use it as your prayer list this week.

Session 5

The Importance of Fellowship

In session 2 we read how the Holy Spirit was at work in the lives of the first disciples. With courage, Peter shared the message of forgiveness and new life through Jesus. Those responsive to that message became the first church. These early Christians shared close and trusting relationships with each other. A word we use to describe the time spent nurturing that trust and closeness is "fellowship." Together, read Acts 2:36-47, which describes these new believers' response to Peter's message, and the new found fellowship they enjoyed.

1. Share one of your earliest memories of church.
2. Verse 41 states that 3000 people became Christians that day. What do you imagine that would have been like?
3. How did the fellowship described in verses 42-47 impact the lives of these new disciples, and the lives of others around them. Which aspect of the new life they shared together as God's people impresses you the most?
4. Which part of this passage would you like to experience more in your life?
5. In Hebrews 10:24, 25 we are challenged not to neglect Christian fellowship. Commit these verses to memory this week. How does this passage challenge you?

6. What is one way you can encourage others in your church this week. What would prevent you from following through on this?

Session 6

Sharing Your Testimony

Your testimony is the sharing of how God has been at work in your life. God can use our testimony to encourage other believers, and also as a way to challenge those who do not yet trust Jesus to do so. One of the most powerful testimonies recorded in the Bible was shared by Paul while he was held in prison awaiting trial. Read together Acts 26:1-32, in which Paul shares his story.

1. When it comes to telling stories, most of us have had a parent who has shared stories about his or her childhood. Share one story you have heard your parent tell about his or her growing up years.
2. As Paul shared his story with King Agrippa, what do you notice about the way Paul addresses Agrippa? What do you think we might want to remember from this example.
3. What do you think Paul's motivation was for sharing with King Agrippa? Do you think he was in any way fearful?

4. Why do you think Paul went into detail about his story and did not just use verses from the Bible to share about Jesus?

5. List below the various statements Paul makes about the importance of Jesus in his testimony. Why do you think this is important?

6. Even though your circumstances and your story might be much different than that of Paul's, God can use your story as his instrument to encourage others. This requires a willingness and a readiness that is described in our memory verse for this week. I Peter 3:15. What does this verse say about our strategy in sharing?

7. This week, take the time to write out your testimony on 1-2 pages of paper. This is an excellent way to organize your thoughts along with events in your life, and is an excellent preparation for sharing your testimony. Begin to pray for an opportunity to share your story with another.

Session Seven

Obedient Christian Living

Some have said that the Christian life is more like a marathon than a sprint. It is not running strong for a short time, but rather is about endurance that is able to get one over even the steepest hills. The focus of this last session is on building endurance in our commitment to Christ. One example of Christian endurance from the Bible was the apostle Paul, who was faithful when the path was both smooth and rocky. Read together his perspective on Christian living found in II Corinthians 4:1-7.

1. What does Paul say in this passage about his own strength and capability?

2. How does Paul describe God's work in his life?

3. What do you think is the primary message Paul is trying to communicate about his life?

4. What encouragement does this passage give you to stand strong in your Christian faith?

5. In this passage we sense that Paul was very sure of his purpose as a Christian. In Ephesians 2:10, Paul writes about what God has planned in the life of each and every disciple. Read it together and memorize it this week. How can we know what special purpose or assignment God would have for us?

6. As Jesus' followers, we have been given the special privilege of knowing God and living for God. This is not an easy road. In fact, Jesus called it the narrow road that few would choose to follow. Your ability to stay on this road is not dependent on your own strength, but rather on your determination to keep Jesus at the center of your life. One of the biggest obstacles is the desire to "take back" the control you gave to Jesus when you face difficulties in life.

The Wheel Illustration

