

# Discipleship Conversations

## Discipling Leader Introduction

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Discipling Leader! You are about to embark on a remarkable adventure – an opportunity to invest your life in helping someone grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ. We were made for this!

### What is Discipleship Conversation?

A discipleship conversation is two people exploring together what it means to be disciples of Jesus. In our busy lives we rarely pause to think about our spiritual lives let alone talk about them with someone else. A Discipleship Conversation creates the space for us to listen and encourage one another.

### Background Assumptions Behind Discipleship Conversations

1. We only remember 20% of what we hear, but 70% of what we discuss. So getting folks to talk is more effective than giving them lots of information.
2. Life changing truths tend to be caught more than taught.
3. Discipleship is primarily about the reordering of our hearts, not the educating of our brains. Most of us don't need more information. We need our loves reformed. See *You Are What You Love* by James K.A. Smith.

### What are our goals for Discipleship Conversations?

1. Get people, including us, talking about our faith.
2. Provide folks a companion on the journey of faith.
3. Provide a process for investing in others.
4. Raise up the next group of Discipling Leaders.

### What will you talk about?

Later in this guide is a list of suggested questions for you to explore. At first these will be general like "Tell me about your family, interests, and work?" or "What is your HP Pres story?" As you get to know one another you will ask questions like "Has there been something in the Scriptures or something from a sermon that has caught your attention lately?" or "Where have you sense God in your life recently?" Often you will begin by asking, "Is there anything that you want to talk about today?"

## What makes for a good Discipleship Conversation?

A good Discipleship Conversation is one in which the conversation partners are curious, ask questions and listen well. A Discipleship Conversation is not counseling, coaching, mentoring, or instruction. It is not primarily a place to give advice. It is a conversation between two disciples of Jesus. Each Discipleship Conversation will look a little different as the conversations will be shaped by the personalities of the partners, the chemistry that develops between them and the needs of the Discipling Participant.

## Sample Discipleship Conversation Questions

- Here are questions to use at the first and possibly second conversation (It would be appropriate for the Discipling Leader to answer these first few questions yourself as a way of establishing rapport):
  - Tell me about yourself.
  - What is your HP Pres story? How did you get connected to the church and how are you currently involved?
  - How and when did Christ become important in your life?
  - Where do you see yourself on the Discipleship Path - i.e. Finding Jesus, Following Jesus, Leading People to Find & Follow Jesus? (See below for a copy of the Discipleship Path.)
  - What is a next step you would like to take in your spiritual growth that I can encourage you in?
- It is helpful to begin each conversation with general questions like “How are you doing?” and “How has your week been?” This may flesh out an issue that will become the focus of that conversation.
- As you get to know your Discipleship Conversation partner, there will be logical questions to ask each month like...
  - If married – “How is your spouse?” (use their name!)
  - If they have kids – “How are the kids doing?” (use their names, too.)
  - How is work going?
- After your first 2 or 3 conversations, a good question to begin with is...
  - “Is there anything particular that you would like to talk about today?”

- If your discipleship partner has nothing in particular they want to talk about, you want to be ready with 2 or 3 questions. Pick ones that seem to naturally flow from your previous conversations. Here are some to consider in no particular order:
  - What insights have you had since our last conversation?
  - What is God teaching you right now?
  - How is Jesus at work in your life this season?
  - What are you grateful for today?
  - Is there anything you are sad about this week?
  - What spiritual practices have you found helpful in your spiritual growth (i.e. worship, personal Bible reading, joining a Community Group, prayer, etc.)
  - (During Lent) Are you doing anything different this year for Lent?
  - Have you heard a sermon recently or studied something in Scripture that has got you thinking?
  - Have you read anything recently in Scripture or a Christian book that is encouraging you or challenging you?
  - Over the last 5 years, how have you grown in your faith?
  - What is the biggest obstacle you are facing in your relationship with Jesus?
  - What are three bits of wisdom you have learned over time that you want to pass on to your loved ones?
  - How is your soul doing this month?
  - Is there some way in which you've sense the Holy Spirit nudging you recently?
  - Who is God calling you to love?
- To explore something more fully, you can use prompts like...
  - Tell me more about...
  - Will you explain \_\_\_\_\_ to me?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ sounds important to you.
  - Let me know I heard you right, you are saying ...

## How will this work?

You will be randomly matched with someone of the same gender. We ask you to meet six times for our hour within a six-month period. This could be once a month, every other week or some other schedule that works well for the two of you. This can be done at the church, in a coffeeshop, at one of your homes, etc. At the end of your six meetings, you can continue to meet by mutual agreement or sign up for another discipleship conversation or take a break from this process.

## Some Miscellaneous Tips

- Be persistent in connecting with your Discipling Participant. Use email, text, and phone calls. Don't take a lack of response as a rejection. Try again.
- At your first couple of meetings, listen carefully to discern where your Participant is in their spiritual life.
- Jot down a few notes after each conversation to guide you in praying for your Participant.
- **Pray!** Pray before your conversation. Pray for your participant at the end of your conversation. After a meeting or two, ask them if they would like to pray, as well at the end of the meeting. Give them space on this as many people have never prayed out loud. Pray for your Participant regularly.

## Other Resources

Our experience has been that asking good questions is usually enough to make for a good Discipleship Conversation. However, if you or your conversation partner would benefit from having something to read and discuss together, here are some ideas:

- [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org) – a great place to find answers to questions about the Bible and Christianity.
- For a discussion of Biblical or theological issues, a good resource is The Gospel Coalition website (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>). You can check out the website or Goggle a particular topic – i.e. “tgctrinity” or “tgcracialjustice”.
- Christianity Today is another good resource for general articles to discuss. (<https://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/>)

## Next Steps

- You and your Discipling Participant will receive an email with each other's contact information.
- Once you receive this email, please contact your Discipling Participant within one week by email, text or phone or some combination of all three. Know that it may take them a week or two to get back to you. If you don't hear back after one week, resend an email and text. If you get no response after two weeks, let us know.
- The matching process can take several weeks depending on the number of Leaders and Participants we have. If you don't hear from us after one month from your training date, please check in with us for an update on our progress.

## Discipleship Path (<https://www.hppres.org/discipleship-path>)



**FINDING**  
*Jesus*

**FOLLOWING**  
*Jesus*

**LEADING**  
*others to find  
and follow Jesus*

## Helpful Definitions

### Discipleship

Let's start with a simple definition of discipleship. Please note discipleship or disciple-making refers to what we mean when we say we make disciples.

Matthew 28:19-20 gives us a summary description of Jesus' mandate:

(19)Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

These verses provide a surprising amount of gold, with succinct clarity on disciple making.

1. Helping people - We have to initiate and be intentional—because we are to “go” and “make” disciples (vs.19).
2. Trust - Disciple making is about repentance and conversion with the emphasis on grace—baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (vs.19).
3. Follow - Disciple making is about obedience (becoming more like Jesus) and sanctification (increasing holiness) - “teaching them to obey everything I commanded you” (vs. 20).
4. Jesus - He is the object and focus in discipleship; disciples are to become His “apprentices” and “live life” as He would live - “make disciples” (vs. 19).

With these four components from Matthew 28 in mind, we define disciple-making this way:

*Discipleship is helping people to find and follow Jesus.*

This is a simple definition, but not a simplistic one. The full meaning of it is wonderfully life altering.

### Disciple

The second key definition refers to what it means to be a disciple. A good frame to the definition comes out of Matthew 4:19. It makes it easy to reference and memorize. And He said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (ESV).

You can easily divide this verse so that it becomes a framework for the three key parts we find in the rest of the New Testament on what it means to be a disciple. These three parts include (1) “following” Jesus (head); (2) “being changed” by Jesus through the Holy Spirit (heart); and (3) being committed to the mission of Christ (bringing more people into a relationship with Jesus) (hands). Based on those three parts, check out our definition:

***A disciple is someone who is following Jesus, is being changed by Jesus and is committed to the mission of Jesus. (Bobby Harrington)***

### **The Holy Spirit**

Note this very important biblical teaching in our “discipleship” and “disciple” definitions: The presence and power of the Holy Spirit are vitally important in disciple making. He is the agent that draws us to follow Jesus (John 16:7-11; 1 John 2:20-27); that changes us into Jesus’ image (2 Corinthians 3:17- 18; Galatians 5:22-23); and that powers our partnership in Jesus’ mission (Matthew 28:20; Acts 1:6-8).

The Great Commission ends with a promise. Jesus tells us that He will be present with us through His Holy Spirit as we make disciples: “And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). We depend on this promise. And we believe that the Spirit’s presence needs to be our mindset underlying all that we do as disciple makers.

### **Discipleship is for both Non-Christians and Christians**

Our definitions for “discipleship” and “disciple” apply to both non-Christians and to Christians. Many people refer to discipling non-Christians as evangelism. We do not quibble (or take issue) with that. But we find it easier and more biblical to think of disciple making as something we do for both non-Christians and for Christians

## Thoughts on Listening Well – Exploring the Differences Between Dialogue, Discussion and Debate

In <b>DISCUSSION</b> we try to...	In <b>DEBATE</b> we try to...	In <b>DIALOGUE</b> we try to...
Present ideas	Succeed or win	Broaden our own perspective
Seek answers and solutions	Look for weakness	Look for shared meaning
Persuade others	Stress disagreement	Find places of agreement
Enlist others	Defend our opinion	Express paradox and ambiguity
Share information	Focus on 'right' and 'wrong'	Bring out areas of ambivalence
Solve our own and others' problems	Advocate one perspective or opinion	Allow for and invite differences of opinion and experience
Give answers	Search for flaws in logic	Discover collective meaning
Achieve preset goals	Judge other viewpoints as inferior, invalid or distorted	Challenge ourselves and other's preconceived notions
Acknowledge feelings, then discount them as inappropriate	Deny other's feelings	Explore thoughts and feelings
Listen for places of disagreement	Listen with a view of countering	Listen without judgment and with a view to understand
Avoid feelings	Discount the validity of feelings	Validate other's experiences and feelings
Avoid areas of strong conflict and difference	Focus on conflict and difference as advantage	Articulate areas of conflict and difference
Retain relationships	Disregard relationships	Build relationships
Avoid silence	Use silence to gain advantage	Honor silence

*Adapted by Tanya Kachwaha 2002 from Huang-Nissan (1999) and Consultant/Trainers Southwest (1992)*