

Practices of Healthy Discipleship Groups

Leaders Equipping and Training Session #2

Introduction

- Focus on church **health**, not growth
- ⁵ What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.
- The assumption is that the church will grow numerically, if it is healthy

Key Church Health Indicators

- Empowering Leadership
- Gift-oriented Ministry
- Passionate Spirituality
- Functional Structures
- Inspiring Worship
- **Holistic Small Groups**
- Missional and Evangelistic Thrust
- Loving Relationships

Key Platforms for Discipleship

- Small groups, fellowship groups, and Sunday School are the key platforms for us to build a Disciple-Making Church, where people:
 - study and apply God's word,
 - pray together,
 - care for one another,
 - serve one another, and
 - reach out to others
- Disciples will identify a couple of committed people and disciple them on a personal basis for a period of one year
- What does a committed disciple look like?

Key Marks of a Christian Disciple

- **Knows God and his word:** This is done through Bible study and application
- **Demonstrates Christlike character:** As a result of Bible study and application, the Christian becomes more like Christ in patience, endurance, humility, and self-denial
- **Loves one another:** Christlike character is reflected in our personal relationships, families, fellowship groups, and in community
- **Serves one another:** Christlike character is also lived out in our serving one another through giving our time, talent, and resources
- **Committed to the mission of Christ:** This is done through our witness, outreach, evangelism, and multiplying disciples and discipleship groups

What is the Purpose of Small Groups?

- **Small Group infrastructure:**
- A disciple-making church (DMC) must develop an expanding network of cell or small groups
- The small group network is the infrastructure and strategy for mobilising and making disciples of Jesus Christ.
- What is the purpose of small groups? Why do small groups exist?
- Bible study? Fellowship? Social club?
- **To facilitate disciple-making: Bible study → transformation → building community → mission**

How to Build Discipleship Groups

- **(1) Clarify the goal of discipleship groups (DGs)**
- This must be embraced by all group members and established across all groups
- Discipleship Groups should be **holistic** and have the following DNA structure: Bible, transformation, community, and mission

How to Build Discipleship Groups

- **(2) Study the Bible for understanding and application**
- ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to **obey** everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matt 28:19-20)
- ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly **equipped for every good work** (2 Tim 3:16-17)

How to Build Discipleship Groups

- **(3) Develop ways to care for one another within the group**
- Stay in touch regularly and pray for one another
- Offer support and encouragement to one another
- Visit and care for those who are in need
- Arrange for fun times outside of group meetings

How to Build Discipleship Groups

- **(4) Decide on ways to serve the church together as a group**
- Join choir as a group
- Join PM service as group
- Serve as an usher
- Teach children Sunday School
- Find opportunities to serve outside the church as well

How to Build Discipleship Groups

- **(5) Develop accountability between members of the group**
- Make covenant agreements with one another
- Commit to open sharing: facts → opinions → beliefs → feelings
- Trust and transparency are fruits of recognizing we are all recipients of God's grace for the forgiveness of sins
- Request for someone to follow-up on you for specific matters

How to Build Discipleship Groups

- **(6) Open the groups to include newcomers**
- A group that is closed becomes a private club and will eventually fade
- Arrange activities to introduce the group to newcomers, including non-believers
- Follow-up on absentees and ask how they are doing
- Pray for open doors to share Christ with non-believers

How to Develop Discipleship Groups

- **(7) Develop discipleship relationships within the group**
- Pastors and elders commit to discipling 1-2 people
- Discipleship is balanced between study, practice, and support
- Discipleship is modelled, not just taught
- Discipleship includes admonition and correction, when necessary
- Discipleship offers care, guidance, and mentoring
- Discipleship involves participation in growth platforms
- Discipleship means multiplication

How to Develop Discipleship Groups

- **(8) Adopt an outward orientation**
- Expose ourselves to community needs and commit to supporting community projects
- Adopt a missionary and pray for global mission
- Communicate with missionaries and support them through prayer and giving
- Learn about what God is doing in other parts of the world
- Read missionary biographies

The Urgent Need for Leaders

- In order to support a Disciple-Making Church (DMC), we must expand our leadership base to support the endeavour
- **Key point:** The church will only grow to the capacity of its leadership base, both in quantity and quality
- The purpose of LET is to help support that endeavour

Discussion Questions

- Considering the **practices** of healthy discipleship groups:
 - study and apply God's word,
 - pray together,
 - care for one another,
 - serve one another, and
 - reach out to others
- What are some strengths and weaknesses of your current discipleship group?
- What can be done to address the weaknesses?