

Discipleship Groups

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ”
Galatians 6:2

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. Ecclesiastes 4:12

Why a Discipleship Group?

A **discipleship group** is designed to provide ongoing close relationships in which we support one another through prayer. Though this happens already through community groups it is still possible to come and go without any one knowing what is going on with your soul. A recent study showed that 19 of 20 men have no best friend inside the church. We have found that a deeper ongoing relationship with two or three other peers in the context of the church is vital for a healthy walk with God.

We see the discipleship group modeled by Jesus in his relationship with Peter, James, and John; or in the relationship of David and Jonathan; or Paul, Barnabas, and Timothy. Of course even more basically, there is God himself: eternally existent as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Due to the level of intimacy desired, these groups should be of the same gender and between 3-5 people. Typically it is advisable for discipleship groups to consist of individuals of all the same general spiritual level. However, some find that having 1 more mature person to lead the group is helpful. Therefore some groups have a designated leader and some merely a gathering of peers with no designated leader. Both types are acceptable.

What do they do?

At Midtown we ask the discipleship groups to focus on several things: 1) Sharing life with one another; 2) Prayer for one another; 3) Prayer for our friends who are not Christians; 4) Confession/Accountability (i.e. sharing our struggles and helping each other to walk the Christian life more faithfully). To accomplish this we suggest several practices or disciplines for the groups from which they should feel free to customize their agendas.

Suggested Disciplines:

1. To be aware of our needs and pray for one another.

Romans 15:30 “I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.”

2. To pray for our ministry to our friends who do not yet know Christ. (usually focusing on 2-3 each)

Philemon 6 “I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.”

3. To encourage each other from the scripture or to go through a book or devotional together.

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2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”

4. To memorize scripture together.

Psalms 119:11 “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

5. To honestly confess our sins, and hold each other accountable.

James 5:16 “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

6. Share what is going on in your lives.

1 Thessalonians 2:8 “We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.”

Sample Agenda:

Each person talks about what is happening in their lives, their ministry with their unbelieving friends and where they find themselves most struggling recently. After each person shares someone else prays for them and their friends.

Of course it takes time to develop trust and the group should expect to grow in their honesty and depth as relationships grow.

When do they meet?

Many different times of day. Usually every week or every other week, for about one and a half hours. Some meet before work, others during lunch, a few are meeting during the evening. It really depends on your schedule, but try to meet more than once a month, in order to stay current. For many people, discipleship groups serve as a great companion to community groups (not too dissimilar from Jesus’ own group of 3 that came out of his group of 12). Keeping that in mind, we do encourage these groups to take place during the day time so as to protect from having too many nightly commitments during the week.

How do I find one?

Because of the personal nature of discipleship groups it is difficult to centralize their formation. The goal is to find a partner/s who seems to be in a similar place spiritually. Usually an individual will approach one other person asking about the possibility. If that is mutually agreeable the two then decide together on a third (sometimes a 4th). Sometimes one person will approach the two others at once. A very natural place to consider a discipleship group is in the context of your own community group. In that case, it may just be a matter of finding opportunities to spend time together over coffee or lunch on a regular basis outside CG meetings. But perhaps they can come out of relationships formed through our retreat or social gatherings.

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While the leadership of Midtown is very involved in the formation and maintenance of community groups and bible studies, we currently see discipleship groups differently. This is a means of discipleship that we place squarely on the Midtowner to pursue. Therefore, the elders and WST don’t manage a list of discipleship groups. We believe this is something that you are to take full ownership of, but we are happy to be a sounding board if you need additional direction for how your group should function or ideas on people to pursue.

Ephesians 6:18¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (NIV)

Philippians 4:6⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (NIV)

Colossians 4:3³ And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. (NIV)