



PORTICO CHURCH

DISCIPLESHIP GROUP MINISTRY GUIDE



And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt. 28:18-20)

DISCIPLESHIP

Jesus commissions his disciples with a task: discipleship. A disciple is someone who seeks to learn from and follow the ways of a teacher or a master. The elements of being a disciple include:

1. Hearing the call of Jesus¹
2. Repenting
3. Believing the Gospel
4. Following Jesus

Discipleship is the very essence of being a Christian. There is no distinction between a Christian and a disciple of Jesus when both terms are properly understood. The earliest disciples of Jesus were no different than us. They struggled to believe, they sinned, they had ugly past lives, and they were all forgiven and given a new life in Christ. When Jesus calls his first disciples he says to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17). When we follow Jesus, our hearts also become oriented towards others, and we desire to share the treasure we have found in the gospel.

Jesus commands us: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28: 19-20). In this spirit, Portico’s mission is *Uniting People to Life in Christ*.

The Discipleship Ministry at Portico seeks to provide a framework for disciples to follow Christ in the context of the local church. This community project takes shape in **discipleship groups, care teams, and events** for both **women and men**.

PORTICO DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Discipleship Groups are an opportunity to meet in gender-based groups every other week and go deeper together in study of Scripture, in prayer, and in relationship. We mature together as disciples of Christ, growing in our love of God and others. These groups are open to newcomers, willing to multiply if numbers increase rather than restrict membership. Group information is posted to help men and women at Portico easily identify a group to join. Group leaders are not

¹ From *The Walk* by Stephen Smallman.



experts, but fellow learners overseeing the group. Members of groups should be consistent, committed, and remain focused on serving others in the group rather than on getting their own needs and preferences met. Like Community Groups, our Discipleship Groups are overseen by Portico's elders.

- Ideally 4-6 members per DG, led by a member of Portico. Facilitators and hosts can rotate.
- Focus on intentional study of Scripture, prayer, and caring for one another well.
- Warm and welcoming to newcomers.
- Summer and winter breaks will be the time for multiplying, starting, or changing DG's.

LEADING A DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Discipleship Group leaders are members of Portico Arlington who are willing to take responsibility for consistently meeting with others every other week with the aim to make disciples of Christ. The first requirement of being a DG leader is being a disciple and follower of Jesus. This does not mean you are a perfect Christian, a guru with all life's answers, or a biblical expert that has the entire bible memorized front to back. But you should be a follower of Jesus with the desire to move deeper and deeper into the gospel with those around you. The second requirement is leading the group. Remember, you do not have to be the perfect leader, that is a role reserved for Jesus. The DG leader will be responsible for determining the time, location, and content of the group's discussion. They should consider the meeting environment that best fits the group needs and should try their best to meet as consistently as possible. When leading, make much of Christ. Point people to the saving grace of God, not your ability to lead a discussion. In a healthy group, there is little distinction between the DG leader and the rest of the group members. We are all accomplishing the same mission of uniting people to life in Christ.

If you are considering becoming a DG leader, contact Sheamus Larkin (for men) or Sandy Tirrell (for women).

FELLOWSHIP

One of the goals of discipleship is reminding each other of the fellowship we have with God the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3). God intimately knows each of us, and our joy is only complete when it is found in Him. From this shared position of fellowship with God, we also have fellowship with fellow believers. God is the basis from which our community and fellowship derives. This is modeled in Jesus' command to love one another:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).



To love people and point them to Jesus, you need to get to know them. The time you use in your group meetings to get to know the members and develop the relationship must be considered as fundamental to your gatherings, not mere preliminaries². Take time to genuinely get to know the people in your discipleship group. Ask them questions, listen to their stories, understand their perspectives, and love them as God loves us. As our fellowship with Christ deepens, our fellowship with others will flourish as well.

WORD

In Discipleship Groups we engage deeply with Scripture in a way that helps us mature together in faith, love the Lord more deeply, and apply Scripture to real life. We have a list of Bible study resources and will continue to add to it, but if you have another Bible study resource that you would like to use, or if you would like to read through a book together—one whose purpose is to increase love and knowledge of God—please run it by Pastor Nate Wagner.

Resources:

- Inductive Bible Study method³
 - Comprehension: What is the context? What does it say, and how? What do you notice?
 - Interpretation: What does it mean in context? How does it point us to the cross, or what does it mean in light of the cross?
 - Application: What does it mean to us? What should we do with this?
 - [10 Tips for Getting Started with Inductive Bible Study | Crossway Articles](#)

- [List of Studies and Books](#)

- Tips to consider:
 - Print Scripture and have members annotate as they read.
 - Use Crossway's ESV illuminated Scripture journals that have space for writing.
 - Listen/read the passage before the meeting.
 - Read the passage aloud together a few times.
 - Use a study Bible, especially to help with understanding context.

PRAYER

Prayer is foundational to our identity and everything we do as disciples of Christ, because through Christ we are deeply loved children dependent on our heavenly Father, the Creator, who has invited us into relationship. Praying is an extension of the relational time that the group has

² The Walk, by Stephen Smallman

³ From *Women in the Word* by Jen Wilken



together and the connection with the Lord through time in the Word. God speaks to us through Scripture, which forms the basis of our responding to him in prayer. For various reasons, prayer can be relegated to opening and closing meetings, or rushed despite the intention to spend time in prayer. Many people are uncomfortable praying out loud with others. In Discipleship Groups, we will grow and help others grow in prayer.

Consider:

- Experiment with using your chosen Scripture passage to guide your prayer time. This will help you learn to pray God’s heart and will, keeping your prayer time fresh.
- Designate a significant chunk of group time to prayer, for example 5-7 minutes/person, then stick with it each week.
- Have each member share personally before praying for them: a praise, confession, petition, and person. (The “person” is someone who does not yet know Christ.) This structure will help you stay balanced in prayer.
- Keep in mind that the goal is to pray, so aim to be brief in sharing. (Minimize umbrella prayers, “You know all that was said tonight, Lord, but we’re out of time...”)
- Pray specifically, intentionally, consistently, and persistently—with anticipation— together.

Follow up during the week, or at the next group. Walk the road together. Share how you see the Lord at work!

MULTIPLICATION

To remain focused on relationship and hospitality, a group that gets to a size where welcoming newcomers is hampered should seek to multiply. Multiplication also is an act of training and developing new leaders to exercise the gifts that the Spirit gives to the church, and it invites the entire group to adopt the mindset of Christ by seeking to be of service in pursuit of the main goal of making and maturing disciples.

Steps of Multiplication:

1. Identify potential leaders and give them opportunities to lead. (Must be church members, in a season of life that will allow them to be healthy leaders).
2. Discuss plans to multiply with Sandy and/or Sheamus.
3. Talk with potential leaders about starting a group.
4. Determine specifics of day/time and when the group will become two.
5. Communicate no less than one month out to the group about the multiplication, allow for questions.
6. Get a sense from the group of which group members will be in which group.
7. Multiply and remind everyone that community group is only an introduction to Christian community, and that being in a different group than someone does not limit you being “in community” with them.



Yearly Rhythms

Discipleship Groups take regular breaks during the summer and holiday months. This is to allow leaders to rest, plan, and refresh, and it acknowledges the rhythms of life of our city. While there may be informal meetings, leaders should take a break from the regular pattern of their group to reflect and plan for the future of the group.

December + January—Group Break

February-June—Groups Meet

July + August—Groups Break

September-November—Groups Meet