

On-Ramps for Discipleship

Engaging in a ministry of discipleship can seem like a difficult task for most believers, especially for those who have not had someone come alongside them. There are a few “on-ramps” for discipleship that can help you get started.

Jesus’ final charge to His followers was to “make disciples.” (Matthew 28:18-20) The term disciple means a follower, one who takes the same path. To become a Christian is to become a disciple, a follower of Christ. Therefore, in its most basic sense, *discipleship* is simply helping another believer grow in his relationship with Christ.

The term *discipleship* most often refers to grounding a new or young believer in his relationship with Christ. Other disciplers have stepped into a “come alongside role” when someone is working through a particular difficulty. Others have had a lifelong spiritual friendship that grew out of discipleship in their early years in the faith.

This grid is one way of viewing opportunities to be involved in discipleship.

Person or phase	Objective in discipleship	Content
Unbeliever, seeker	Introduce them to Christ	Bible; Gospel materials
New believer or young in spiritual growth.	Grounding them in their relationship with Christ.	Foundational topics: security and position in Christ, God’s love and forgiveness, Bible, prayer, church life, ministry of the Holy Spirit, spiritual warfare, the character of God, how to grow spiritually. Usually an 8-16 week series)
Growing, but not yet confident of being responsible for his/her own spiritual growth.	Deepening their understanding of grace, faith and obedience. Pursuit of Christ-likeness Involvement in ministry	Biblical studies in grace, faith, obedience. Apologetics Reliability and authority of the Scriptures Disciplines of the Christian life Book of Romans or Ephesians; Gospel of John
A believer sidetracked by sin	Repentance, confession Restoration	Forgiveness, counsel, accountability. Spending quality time with God.
Established follower (Life on life)	Following Christ together. Commitment to a body of believers. Ministry engagement	Lifestyle “one-anothers” of Romans 12 Ministry together. Iron sharpens iron, motivating each other Spiritual input from many sources, people

The 2nd and 3rd rows are the phases where discipleship is the most common and intentional.

In each phase, objectives and content give definition to discipleship.

The most common aspect of all phases of discipleship is the opportunity to process spiritual things in the context of a friendship. Spiritual growth takes place in the context of transparent relationships.

If you don't have access to discipleship materials at your church, try these websites:

www.cru.org (especially a series called Practical Christian Living)

www.navigators.org (numerous guides and studies)

www.ccbt.org (Centers of Church-based Training; see the 4-volume Discovery Series)

<http://advance.cbmc.com/products/operation-timothy>

www.catapultministries.org (Set Your Foundation, free download) More resources coming.

Getting started?

- Find an experienced discipler and ask if you can join him when he leads a study series with a young believer.
- Work through a basic discipleship study series with a couple other people to become familiar with the material.
- Invite a new or young believer to join you to go through a foundational study series. Limit the series to 6-10 weeks to relieve the fear some have of not being able to step back out.

There is so much to expect: people will respond, you will grow and lives will be changed.