



GO Disciple

Pastor's Guide







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A Mission, A Mandate

“All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 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 everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
Matthew 28:18-20 (CSB)

Our mission is clear and the word has been given! “Go... and make disciples.” It is our longing as pastors to see the people whom we shepherd become disciples, who then make more disciples. Because of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, we have His authority to make disciples, anywhere we go, and to make lots of them.

With authority from the all-powerful Creator of the universe, what prevents our churches from being a disciple-making powerhouse? One would think that with Jesus’ authority and a guiding mission to make disciples all over the world, nothing could stop us. Many churches however, have become unproductive when it comes to disciple-making. The emphasis of this booklet is to not only encourage the pastor, but also put forward a simple plan for making disciples that is biblically based and can be done by any individual who is willing to put forth the effort.

5 Barriers to Disciple-Making

The Missing Connection to Evangelism

Somehow, the modern-day church has separated evangelism from making disciples. This separation has resulted in a decreased emphasis on both. Evangelism produces new believers that need discipling. Properly developed disciples become evangelists. In Mark 1:17, Jesus states, "Follow me," Jesus told them, "and I will make you fish for people." A key word in this sentence is "make". Jesus did not hope that His disciples would be evangelists. He did not wish upon a star that somehow this group of twelve men would be disciples who would then make more disciples. The word "make" means intentionality. Evangelism was not an option Jesus had for His disciples. It was His task to make disciples who would become evangelists themselves!

Notice also that evangelism was the beginning and end result of being a disciple of Jesus. The disciples Jesus invited to join Him were not yet fully devoted followers when He extended His invitation to them on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus extended an invitation to join Him in order that they might believe in Him, and as they believed and became more like Him, they became evangelists themselves. The obvious intent of Jesus' disciple-making strategy in Mark 1:17 was to make disciples to become evangelists, and therefore multiply the Kingdom by offering the Gospel to others.

Confusing Discipleship with Disciple-Making

A speaker asked the Sunday School teachers participating in a training seminar to share their church's process for making disciples. The overwhelming response was some sort of Sunday or Wednesday evening program that offered a variety of 12 week courses. One teacher described a Wednesday evening class that was attended by about 25 people who filled in blanks in a workbook while watching a 45 minute video; answered some questions from the facilitator; had a group prayer; and then was dismissed to go home or attend choir rehearsal.

Do not get the wrong impression. There is nothing wrong with video-based classes on Wednesday night. Eliminating the church's Wednesday evening ministries is not the point of this discussion. The point is that many church members now mistakenly believe that disciples are made by sitting in rows in classes. But we know that disciples are best made in the context of personal relationships. When Jesus was calling the twelve disciples, Mark 3:14 clearly states that Jesus called (appointed) the disciples "...to be with him, to send them out to preach". To be with him! Relationship was vital to Jesus' strategy of making disciples.

Assuming That Disciple-Making Occurs in Small Groups

An overwhelming majority of churches have some type of Small Group organization. This organization may be an on-campus strategy like Sunday School, or an off-campus strategy like home groups. Call them LifeGroups, Connection Groups, or Community Groups; most of the groups the church has are already too big to be effective at making disciples.

It is vital for the church to involve every member into its Small Group strategy. However, church leaders must not assume that just because a person attends a Small Group that he or she is being disciplined. Sunday School or Small Groups are critical for evangelism, Bible study, connecting people in relationships, and for the church's mission. Attending a Small Group makes for better church members, but it does not necessarily make a person a disciple. Lost people attend Sunday School. As we will see later in the book, making disciples happens best in smaller groups, and Sunday School should be a vital part of helping make smaller groups happen.

Lack of Personal Disciple-making Mentors

Informal surveys conducted with pastors and ministry staff reveals a startling discovery. Many church leaders did not have a discipling role model themselves. Though not impossible, it is definitely more difficult to make a disciple when the leaders themselves have not had a healthy disciple-making experience. Since many people use previous experience as a model, we have many church leaders who need a discipling relationship themselves.

We cannot afford to assume that a person that leads a Sunday School class or Small Group is a disciple-maker. They may be a leader and a teacher, but not necessarily a disciple-maker. Many staff members must be able to develop and implement programs, but good programmers are not necessarily good disciplers.

Define A Disciple

Definition is a key element of what the church wants to accomplish. The church needs to create a “picture” of what it wants its members to be. A definition of what a disciple is will help a person picture the expectations the church has for its members. Therefore, the church needs to define what a disciple looks like. This is not as easy of a task as it may appear. GO Disciple puts forward a simple definition of a disciple.

A disciple is a follower of Christ who...

shares the Gospel;

grows through Bible study and prayer;

lives in biblical community;

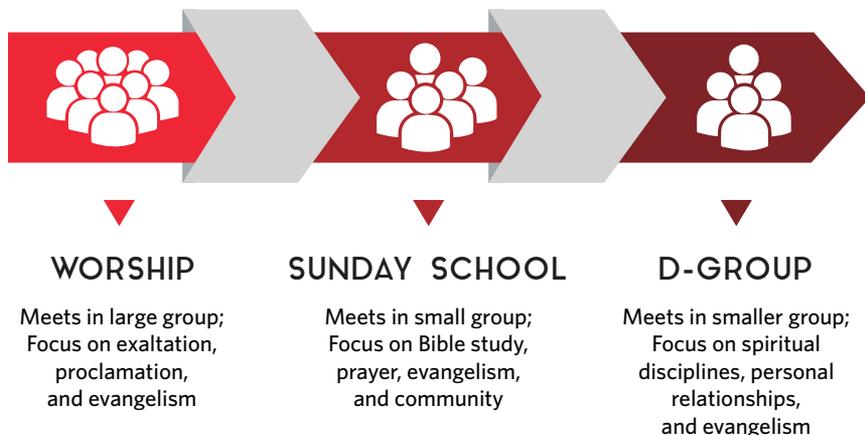
is on mission through the local church to make more disciples.

This definition is narrow enough to include vital characteristics of a disciple, yet broad enough so as not to be legalistic. It is also biblically based (Mark 1:17; Romans 10:15; 2 Timothy 3:16-27; John 15:7; Hebrews 10:24-25; John 20:21; Matthew 28:18-20). This definition maintains a biblical focus on evangelism and discipleship.

A Process Instead of A Program

What many churches need is a simple process for making more disciples. When a new believer or a new member joins the church, that individual needs to grow. The church must provide an uncomplicated process to disciple every new member. The GO Disciple process is simple, biblical, and reproducible! Almost anyone going through this process will be able to replicate it with other people they may know. GO Disciple can be done anywhere: at home; at work; at school; a restaurant; a park; or the family dinner table. The only resource needed is a Bible.

DISCIPLE MAKING PROCESS



GO Disciple is a simple process to make reproducing disciples of church members. The process includes ministries that the church is already engaged.

Worship (Congregation)

Corporate worship is the large group gathering of the church that primarily focuses on exaltation, proclamation, invitation, and evangelism. Because of its size, it is difficult to develop relationships in corporate worship.

Sunday School/Small Group (Class)

Sunday School provides social space for people to connect to each other through Bible study, prayer, evangelism, and community. Because it uses an “open group concept” (people can attend anytime without previous experience in the group), Sunday School is the most natural place for guests or new members to connect with other believers on any given Sunday.

D-Groups (Cell)

GO Disciple emphasizes the formation of smaller groups of four people. Why four people? Once a group gets much larger than four, several factors begin to interfere with deeper relationship building in the group, such as too many people and not enough time for everyone to share. Larger groups complicate the logistics. Smaller groups of four people keep things simple. Also, people tend to be better committed to smaller groups than larger. Plus, almost anyone can lead a smaller group of four. Larger groups require more leadership skills. Finally, since the group is smaller, it is easier to develop leaders and reproduce more groups.

Why four people in a D-Group?

We focus on a D-Group of four people because smaller groups are more interactive and generally get better results. Four people are more likely to hold one another accountable than a group of fourteen, or forty!

The next observation on why four people seems to be a good principle for D-Groups comes from the Bible. Though the following idea is an illustration, it is not proposed as a steadfast rule. Instead, it is more of an observation.

In several instances in Scripture, four people form an effective smaller group. Jesus preached to thousands, had a small group of twelve, but had an inner circle of four (Peter, James, John... and Jesus!). Paul often traveled with a smaller group that seemed to have inter-changeable people, but Paul and three companions appear to make up his second mission journey (Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke). In the Old Testament, even King David led a nation, and had a small group of thirty mighty men. But there was a smaller group of three men that made up David's inner circle.

The next few pages will help focus on implementing a process to make disciples in the church.

How to Start the D-Group Process

GO Disciple can spring forth anywhere, but pastors are encouraged to leverage their Sunday School or Small Group structure. Imagine a Sunday School class or Small Group of fifteen people. If this class had only two D-Groups, half of the class would be involved in disciple-making. Furthermore, picture the impact on the class when half, or even a quarter of the members are committed to Scripture memory, Bible study, and prayer during the week through their D-Group.

Talking about making disciples and actually making disciples are two different things. The first is a concept; the second is executing the concept. So let's move from concept to implementation.

The Individual D-Group Member

The individual D-Group member can be anyone, saved or lost. For the primary audience of this book, the focus will be on adults. Children and students will obviously have some variations on the D-Group process. Members of a D-Group are expected to do the following:

- a) Show up for group meetings;
- b) Abide by whatever guidelines the group agrees to;
- c) Complete personal Bible study;
- d) Memorize Scripture.

Many people struggle with Bible reading, and yet we see the importance of knowing the Bible throughout Scripture! Knowing God's Word is essential to the growth of a Christ-follower. An essential part of being a disciple is the daily reading, study, memorization, and meditation of God's Word.

We encourage members of a D-Group to use the following pattern to help them engage their hearts and minds as they read the Bible. This acrostic is based on an example from the book *Rediscovering Discipleship*, by Robby Gallaty.

- H** Highlight. Highlight or circle words that get your attention as you read the Bible passage.
- E** Explain. Explain why you highlighted these words.
- A** Apply. Apply these words to your life. What would you need to do to follow the teaching of these words?
- R** Replicate. Replicate what you have learned with someone else; a family member, friend, neighbor, or co-worker.

For many Christians, the HEAR process will be revolutionary, especially for those who struggle with daily personal Bible study. The HEAR process will be further reinforced at each group meeting.

D-Group Meetings

When the D-Group meets, the leader simply guides the group through the following process.

- a) Scripture Memory. Yes, require group members to memorize Scripture. Take slow, small steps at first, and then add more as the group members gain confidence.
- b) Bible. The group should study the Bible passage that the group is memorizing. This step will help in two specific ways.
 1. The group leader leads the Bible study by using the HEAR process. This will reinforce the HEAR process in personal study as well.
 2. Memorizing the passage will also help group members meditate on the passage during the week.
- c) Pray. End the meeting by asking group members to share how the group can pray for them during the upcoming week. It is generally better to start the prayer time by saying, "Share some things you face this week that the group can pray about for you". Using this process will focus the group on personal prayer needs rather than making them come up with a "prayer list".

Generally, it is best to stay with the above order for each group meeting.

IMPORTANT: After a brief prayer, always start every group meeting by asking members to share the week's memory verse(s). Also, it is best if the leader shares the memory verse first. Do not wait until the end of the meeting for scripture memory because time will run out and the group will not take memorization seriously. Always be prepared to help a group member who is struggling with a verse.

What Passage to Study and Memorize First

Because many people have not been disciplined, not to mention the lack of Scripture memory skills of most church members, select a passage that is familiar to the group. Shorter passages, such as 1 Corinthians 13, Psalm 1, or Psalm 121 are good places to start. Memorize a couple of verses each week. After a few weeks, most group members will have the entire chapter memorized and will be hungry to start another passage.

Forming a D-Group: The Pastor

Because of the simplicity of this process, a D-Group can be formed by just about anyone! But starting a D-Group process in the church requires leadership – specifically pastoral leadership.

Since church members model what the pastor does, it is important for the pastor to not only be in a D-Group, but to even start the first group! Pastoral leadership is important and vital to the success of making disciples.

Because it is preferable for D-Groups to form within the individual Sunday School classes or Small Groups, the pastor should consider starting the first group with three Sunday School or Small Group leaders or teachers. Starting with these leaders maximizes the pastor's influence. Since many teachers have never been disciplined themselves, it is important for the pastor to model what he wants them to do in their groups. Replication is vital to the process of making disciples. Therefore, the pastor should lead his D-Group in a manner that can be replicated – not just by the teachers, but also by the members of their groups.

If the church is large, the pastor should begin by discipling his own staff. Do not assume that every staff member knows how to make disciples. Also, the pastor needs to lead the staff to understand and replicate the strategy, and this is best done by leading the staff by example. Show them what you want them to do.

Pastors! The first generation of leaders that you disciple are the most likely to replicate; followed by generations two and three. The farther a generation of disciples is separated from your leadership, the less influence you will likely have upon them. Therefore, it is vital that you invest yourself carefully into every D-Group you lead.

Forming D-Groups Through Sunday School

Most Sunday School and Small Group leaders will pick up the D-Group process quickly and will only need six or seven weeks to fully understand how to lead a D-Group and how the process works. A passage such as 1 Corinthians 13 is perfect for this group. With only thirteen verses, it can easily be memorized in seven weeks. By using the HEAR process, these leaders do not have to study for several hours like they do for a Sunday School lesson.

After the Small Group leaders have their first D-Group experience with the pastor, they are ready to replicate the process in their own Sunday School. These new leaders should select and invite three people from their Sunday School class or Small Group to join them in a new D-Group. These groups should preferably be made up of the same gender. D-Groups from within the Sunday School can meet for any period of time; however, the longer a group meets together the less likely it will be to replicate and start more groups.

Multiplication

The third generation of D-Groups is when the explosion begins. As more people are engaged in a disciple-making process that can be replicated; the more people there are to form and lead more D-Groups. Beginning with the pastor's original group of three leaders (and the pastor can continue starting D-Groups for more leaders after this first group ends), these three leaders start a group each with three people each. Should the pastor start another group, the second generation of D-Groups will have sixteen people participating. As third generation groups begin, it is conceivable that church could disciple fifty to sixty people.

A common mistake is rushing the process of making disciples. This mistake can appear in several ways, but the two most common are:

- 1) Letting groups get too big. (Four is the ideal number; six is too many).
- 2) Trying to jumpstart the process by starting groups whose leaders have not actually been through a D-Group.

Evangelism

Encourage members of a D-Group to follow through with the "R" of the HEAR process, replicate. One reason many believers do not share Jesus with the lost is because they rarely share Jesus with a Christian! As members replicate what they are learning in their D-Group with other Christians, they will gain confidence to do the same with a lost friend.

Also, as people gain confidence and grow, encourage them to start new D-Groups for neighbors, friends, co-workers, or classmates. In fact, two church members could each invite a lost person to join their D-Group. A D-Group is a perfect environment for a lost person to ask questions. But even more importantly, God's Word is our greatest evangelism tool! Many lost people are familiar with John 3:16, or even 1 Corinthians 13. Take a moment and imagine a lost friend of yours sitting at his or her kitchen table, highlighting words in 1 Corinthians 13 in a Bible. Now picture your friend explaining why he selected those words, first to himself and later to the group. The Holy Spirit will use the Word of God to lead lost people to the cross of Christ! Involving lost people in group Bible study is a fantastic evangelistic plan.

Conclusion

The unmistakable mission of the church is to make disciples. Pastors are busy people. Many are bivocational and must balance their ministry, secular job, and family. Pastors need a simple plan to make disciples and GO Disciple could be that plan. Encouragingly, many church members want to be discipled. These members need a catalyst, and in many churches that catalyst is the pastor. With a little guidance and encouragement, these church members have the opportunity to mature in the Spirit and profoundly impact the people around them with the Gospel.

The GO Disciple process is a simple plan that can be adapted as necessary to fit the context of the individual church.

GO Disciple Resources

Available at www.tnbaptist.org/GoDisciple

Scripture Memory Packets

Scripture Memory Workbooks

Scripture Memory Guide

Disciple Guide (for leaders and disciples)

D-Group Quick Start Guide

Disciple-Making Process Guide

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Five OBJECTIVES

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Tennessee Baptist Churches giving through the *Cooperative Program* and the
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