

# Turning Decisionees into Disciples

## Leader's Guide



To the presenter: This curriculum presents a suggested full narrative for a one-hour seminar on how to disciple new Christians. The writers have attempted to provide a conversational-style manuscript for your use. However, if you find that your speaking style differs from ours, feel free to alter the wording to something that you are more comfortable with!

In addition, you will find Scriptures inserted throughout the presentation as a basis for what is said. You may use these in your presentation, or you may merely read them for your own deeper understanding of the rationale used.



### Activity: PBJ

Supplies: a name tag for each participant; two slices of bread, peanut butter, jelly, knife, and a plate for every two participants.

Preparation: Before the session starts, prepare name tags for each individual. Each name tag should have either the letter “E” or “N” on the back of them. Begin the session by welcoming everyone and calling their attention to these letters. Ask each “E” to pair up with an “N”, so that there are teams of two. Once they have done this, proceed to explain the activity:

Those with an “E” are experts and those with an “N” are novices. The experts are to teach the novices how to prepare a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, but the novice must act as though s/he has never heard of such a thing. The novices should make it as difficult as possible for the experts! Give them three to five minutes to complete the activity.

Afterwards, prompt the group to respond. What was their experience? Was it difficult? Was it frustrating? Was it easier than you thought it would be? etc.

Explain: As long-time Christians, we often take for granted a basic understanding of theology and doctrine. But it is important that we recognize that brand new “baby” Christians may not recognize terms and concepts that we use every day. Ideas such as *grow in grace*, *sanctification*, and *devotions*; and practices such as *bible reading*, *prayer*, and even *church attendance*. These will likely all be new to the recently converted. This is why discipleship is so important. We must show these new members of God’s family what it means to live the Christian life and how they can grow in their new relationship with Him.



## **Why Disciple? A Biblical Basis**

**Illustration:** The need for cultivation

Supplies: a small potted plant, preferably with blooms; a bulb or packet of seeds; an unhealthy plant (dry, withering).

Explain: I have here a plant that is in full bloom (show the plant). But it did not start out this way. It started out looking like this (hold up the bulb). This bulb has the potential to grow into a mature plant, with the right help. In the same way, a new believer is gifted by the Spirit with the potential to become a productive disciple. However, just like this bulb, if we leave them alone to gain all that they need without the help of others who are willing to tend to the garden, they will wither and die (show unhealthy plant). It has been said that many if not most new believers disappear out the back door of the church within three months if they are not properly disciplined. But this does not have to happen – intentional discipling of new Christians greatly increases the likelihood that they will grow and mature in the Lord and eventually reproduce their faith in others.<sup>1</sup> This bulb must be planted at the right time, given the right fertilizer with the proper nutrients, have access to sunlight, and get the proper amount of water. In the same way, the new Christian must be nurtured in his or her faith – they need help finding the right nutrients (the Word, prayer, faith, fellowship) and instruction in how to use them. This is what we mean by discipleship. Jesus has commanded us to make *disciples*, not just converts! (Matthew 28:19-20)

All three synoptic gospels record the parable of the sower.  
(Read Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23)

Three obstacles to growth in the new believer appear in this passage. In verse 19, it is lack of understanding. In verse 21, it is trouble and persecution. And in verse 22, it is worries about life and money. Our goal in discipling new Christians is to give them the tools to counter these difficulties so that they can grow into fully devoted disciples. And just as this plant will reproduce itself, the final goal is that the fully devoted disciple will share his or her faith with others and so reproduce his or her faith in them. Our biblical basis for discipling can be firmly rooted in Jesus' command to make *disciples*, not converts! We are to do this, teaching them all that He has commanded.



## **The Process of Discipleship**

Once a decision has been made to live a life dedicated to following Jesus Christ, it is important to keep the decisionee growing in their relationship and commitment.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.disciplingananother.com/FirstSteps/ImplementingFirstSteps/tabid/101/Default.aspx>

Earlier, we read the parable of the sower. In this illustration, the Gospel is the seed. The seed is the Life that Christ gives, and the decision to accept that life is crucial. What is even more crucial is what happens after the decision. *Life* has to change. The decisionee will be convicted on certain areas of their life and change will occur through the power of the Holy Spirit. However, the decisionee must know *more* about the faith to which they have made a commitment, and that process comes through discipleship.

Discipleship will help the decisionee to build a strong foundation for their faith so they will have discernment and the ability to live out their daily lives in a way pleasing and honorable to Christ. (Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:24-25) What is the ultimate source of discipleship? The Bible is the ultimate source, and through reading God's Word, asking questions, and learning how to apply the newly learned truths of Scripture to their lives, they will have the tools necessary to help and encourage them to grow and mature.

This is where the parable of the seed comes in. The work of planting the seed has been completed. However, it is the nurturing of the seed that makes it continue to grow. The soil must be ready, and once it is, the seed has room to grow in ideal conditions. If the seed isn't deeply rooted in the soil, it will die. If it falls on wrong soil, it won't grow... and so forth.

We as disciplers must be adequately equipped to lead the new disciples through a basic introduction to the life of faith. A decision is great; however, what happens after the decision is crucial.



### One-on-One 101

**Comic:** Bible purchase (on Power Point)

- This gives us a picture of the confusion that a new Christian may feel when it comes to the many facets of their new faith.



*Why is a One-On-One group important?*

- Firstly, it puts the responsibility and opportunity for discipleship in the laity's hands. Many people who have been Christians for a longer time often seem to expect the Pastor to do most everything in the church. However, Pastors are *not* able to keep up with everything. A One-on-One, or Undershepherding, program will free the pastor from this responsibility, allowing him to fulfill other responsibilities.
- Secondly, it helps the new believer to feel more comfortable. There is a possibility that the Pastor did *not* play a direct role in leading the unsaved person to Christ. In fact, the new believer may not even know the pastor of the Church. It would be rather awkward if a personal friend had been saved (through your prayer, your evangelistic efforts and witness) and

then directly handed off to the pastor of the church for discipleship. Chances are, this would make a person feel very awkward and “passed-around.”

- Lastly, it capitalizes on the already-existing strong relationship between the new believer and the one who led them to the Lord. It must be remembered that humans of all cultures and backgrounds are made for relationships. People value relationships, and there is good in having the person who led the new believer to the Lord take on the role of discipling their friend. Since trust has already been established, there is more ground and ability to feel comfortable in discussing serious questions.

### **Caution:**

In a One-On-One setting, the Discippler must not try to shape and mold the disciple to his or her preconceived notions about God and Christianity. We must remember the centrality of Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit in Christian maturity. Along these same lines, the new believer also needs to be connected to others in the Body of Christ so that they acquire a more balanced perspective.

*What makes a good One-on-One group?*



**Timing:** Ideally, Undershepherding or One-On-One groups should begin as soon as the person makes a decision, in order to help them to build a firm foundation and to grow in their knowledge and understanding of God. A good average time span for One-On-One discipleship would last 6 months to a year. This way the new believer can learn important fundamental elements of faith and Christian living.

These essentials include: Bible Study, prayer, and accountability.

### **Bible Study**



- Bible Study (quiet times) are important so the new believer can learn about God’s character and nature. It teaches them the discipline of spending time with God daily and being able to distinguish truth from lies. (Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17) Often times, our culture will tell us things without giving us the other side or allowing us to think. We live in a culture that expects us to not ask questions and to believe what is said without thinking. This is where Satan loves to try to distract new and established believers alike. The more we stray from reading the Bible and spending time with God, the more susceptible we are to his lies and ways of living. The discipler and the disciple would be encouraged to read through the Bible together in order to get the disciple more acquainted with the rest of the story.

A good place to begin in the New Testament would be to discuss the Gospel of Mark. It is a short Gospel that moves quickly through the life

of Jesus, but it gives the reader a better glimpse into His nature and character. However, the Old Testament must not be disregarded. It is a great explanation of God's intentions for His creation. It describes sin and its consequences as well as what life was like before Jesus came to earth to dwell as God in human form.

The new believer needs to be oriented to what sin is. Often times society does not acknowledge sin or its consequences and the resulting behavior tears lives apart. The Bible should be read and used as the main source of authority in discipleship and it should be read in large doses. Each week, an amount of Scripture should be agreed upon for reading and reflection. It could be five chapters a day (equaling about 30 chapters of Scripture a week) or it could be one chapter a day (about 7 chapters a week). Either way, there should be accountability in reading to prepare for the discussion next week. If both people have read the designated amount of Scripture, once they have discussed it, they can move on. However, if the selected Scripture has not been read by both people, it must be re-read until both have read it in its entirety.



#### Prayer

- It is important to establish a healthy prayer life for the new believer. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) Sometimes the gospel is presented in such a way that people expect that God will provide their every wish. This is not the case. From the beginning, new believers need to understand the importance of communicating with God as well as *listening* for God's voice. Prayer is not just making requests, it is opening oneself up to hearing and experiencing God. The new believer should be encouraged to keep a prayer journal. Various prayers should be practiced through using the Psalms and the ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication.) methods as models.



#### Accountability

- Accountability is important since temptation does not end with salvation. (James 5:16; Hebrews 10:25; 1 Thessalonians 5:11) Often times, if a person has no accountability, growth can be slow. This is because the person may still be living the values of their old life and may be in limbo with the commitment they had made to follow Christ. Without accountability, it is so easy to rationalize our sins. Everyone struggles with something. Often times the struggles can hinder us from being all we want to be. If we make it a point to include accountability in the One-On-One time, then there is a way for struggles and temptations to be shared, addressed and prayed over in a safe environment. Accountability is a must.



*What are some additional benefits of One-on-One groups?*

#### Questions and discussion

- In a One-On-One group, it is easier for the new believer to ask questions about the Church and practices of worship. There is a chance that the new believer grew up in church and fell away, or there is a possibility that they have never been to a church. It is very important for the discipler to understand the new believer's perspective. This encourages openness to answering questions and explaining the importance of worship in a way that the new believer can understand. It is important for the discipler to know what content to explain and how to explain it. (If necessary, the discipler could go ask the pastor questions.)
- The same applies to theological questions. As the One-On-One group engages in reading the Bible, questions will arise regarding these things. The Bible is quite challenging to understand at times. The One-On-One group provides a safe place for engaging in theological discussions and sharing insights as to what the Word is saying.
- It is important to discuss sacraments as well. (**Comic**: Communion (on Power Point) For the new believer, the meaning and symbolism of these can be confusing.
  - Baptism is important as it symbolizes the washing away of the "old" and the brand new cleansing. We share in Christ's death in our baptism as we were buried with him. So, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the power of the Father, we also can live a new life (Romans 6:3-5). One of the goals of the One-On-One study time should be encouraging a new believer towards baptism.
  - The Eucharist is also something that may come up in discussion. Partaking in the Lord's Supper is important because it is He who sustains us. It is also an act of hospitality for the Lord to open a table for us to partake of his sustenance.

One-On-Ones are a safe place to discuss and orient the disciple into further levels of discipleship.



*How should a One-On-One group be conducted?*

#### Frequency

- It is ideal to commit to meeting once a week for a minimum of an hour and a maximum of 2.5 hours. Sometimes the group may be inclined to run longer and if the Spirit is leading, that is okay. It is important to have adequate time to discuss what was learned and to pray.



#### Format

- The first step in small group is to have a time of catching up. During this time, it is important to *listen* (not try to fix) to what people are saying.

The opening questions do not have to be complicated, but it is good to discuss how their week went. The good and bad elements should be talked about. By listening, you will continue to build trust and confidence in the relationship as well as discern where they are and how they are doing. Both people need the opportunity to talk about their week—the good, the bad, the challenging, the inspiring etc. If there are questions asked during this time, write them down for later discussion. At the end of the catch up time, there should be a time to ask for prayer requests, thus giving an opportunity to lead into prayer.

- For prayer, it is important that *both* people pray for each other. This way the new believer can have a chance to learn how to pray and to get used to praying. Prayer can go for as long as needed, but there can be a minimum of 10-20 minutes.
- The Scripture study portion of the One-on-One meeting will take the most time. This portion is recommended at 30+ minutes in order to give time to discuss what was read and what was learned. A great method to use while working with a new believer is the 5 question system listed below:
  1. What did you like about the verses you read?
  2. What did you dislike about the verses you read?
  3. What did you not understand about the verses you read?
  4. What did you learn from the verses you read? How did/ will you apply what you learned?
  5. What in your life changes from having read these verses?

During this time, if they ask questions, do not spoon feed them. Let the Scripture and the Holy Spirit do the communicating in order for the new believer to gain insight and revelation. Often times this is where people can fall into being shaped by a discipler. While they should be influenced by you, the shaping should come from the Scripture and the application of it in their lives.

- Once Scripture has been discussed and if there are any further questions, this would be a great time to dialogue. This could take about 15-20 minutes for questions and these may be based on church, theology, or just questions about Christian life itself. Either way, try not to impose your personal opinions on them, but encourage them to think and let the Spirit reveal it to them. However, when it comes to questions related to worship and church life, you can take the freedom to answer them according to the practices and rituals of worship within your church. ***The goal here is not necessarily to have all the answers but to lead the new believer in his or her personal discovery.***
- At the end of the meeting, closing with prayer is always recommended. This provides an opportunity to reflect on issues that came up in the meeting as well as to bless the coming week as the Word is read and God is sought after.

For your reference, we have included some supplements in the back of your participant's packet which talk about various formats for one-on-one groups, as well as a list of resources which could be used for study in this setting. Feel free to consult these and adapt them to your particular situations.



### **Small Groups and Church Life**

At the same time that the One-On-One group is occurring, it is important for the new believer to be involved in the church. This way they are connected to the Body of Christ and not solely being influenced by the One-On-One group. They have a chance to see worship in action and to be involved in learning about church practices.

New believers can often feel isolated because they are still in the process of becoming incorporated into the community. It is important that the church does not contribute to this sense of isolation. (Hebrews 10:25) Though they are attending One-On-One discipleship groups, it is imperative for them to be included and integrated into the church fellowship. This may take the form of a Sunday School class for new believers; however, the new believer should choose something that suits their comfort and interests. The class should be one that meets their needs where they are (yet encourages them to grow) and one where they feel included. The discipler could attend the class with the new believer for a few weeks until the new believer feels confident in their choice. Believers need a sense of community and should feel that in the class they choose.

After about 6 months of attending church and participating in One-On-One groups, the believer should be given the opportunity to participate in service.



### **Serving God**

For this portion of the seminar 1 Corinthians 12 provides a backdrop to much of what we will be discussing.

Read and discuss 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 14-20

#### ***Prerequisites***

In order for people to serve in your church, a few things must first be in place:

#### **Comic:** Spiritual gifts (on Power Point)

- When a new believer hears the term “spiritual gifts”, this may cause some confusion!
- First, your church needs to be helping people to discover their spiritual gifts. If you currently have a system in place, *great!* If you do not, we recommend that you get one in place soon. (As a resource, we recommend “Your Spiritual Gifts” by C. Peter Wagner.) This is another

step in the development of the convert into a disciple. The gifting test allows you and the person to know what their gifts are and assists them in finding their God-ordained place in ministry. This will bring them fulfillment as they are serving and will block against potential burn-out.

It is extremely important that new Christians are properly placed in serving positions. If they are misplaced, they may withdraw from your church and possibly church altogether! We must not assume the new Christian has ever served in a volunteer organization, let alone the church. Consequently, we need to be very careful about how we place them in positions.

- Second, your church ought to have a way of placing people in ministries and should be actively recruiting people for ministry involvement. Some churches have a “closed door” to ministry that only allows certain members to serve. But the church needs the entire body to function correctly. It should be simple for people to get plugged into service when they are ready. This does not mean that we cut corners on organization or safety concerns, but instead we make it easy for people who wish to serve to do so. For those who have recently become saved it is important that they are invited to become part of the team and that they are vital to the life of the church.



### Guidelines

Assuming that these elements are in place, the young Christian ought to be encouraged to enter into some valuable service to the church. We propose that the new believer be in the church for at least 6 months before participating in service roles. At this point, the young believer’s involvement may include any type of service that does not have a strong leadership role or require teaching.

The waiting period and the limitations on service may raise some questions for a few of you. Let me explain the rationale behind our decision:

- Let me start by explaining the first rule. We want the new believer to have been in the church for a period of time before getting plugged into service in the church for a couple of reasons. (Matthew 10:16)
  1. First, there are safety precautions that every church should take when recruiting volunteers. There needs to be some time devoted to learning the character of an individual before they are allowed to serve within the church. The church needs to know that this individual has a strong moral compass and is a committed believer. This is in order to avoid potentially devastating situations that can be prevented. So, we must allow a time for determining the character of the individual before we allow them to serve.
  2. Secondly, we need to allow the new Christian to get rooted in their faith before they begin to serve. Young Christians are often

zealous and eager to serve, but with that energy comes the danger of quick burn-out as a result of saying “yes” to too many things too quickly. The young Christian needs to also understand that their salvation is by grace and not by works. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Young Christians need help in knowing that they cannot earn God’s love and should not attempt to do so. Instead, they ought to be instructed that our works flow out of the overflow of our love for God. A new Christian may struggle with these challenges.

- There are several reasons for a time of preparation before a new believer becomes a leader in the church. The new believer is most likely very unfamiliar with the practices and organizational dynamics of many churches. Sticking them into leadership positions too quickly may frustrate them and you! But more dangerously, the new believer’s faith may not yet be strong enough to handle the dynamics that leadership requires. For example, conflict is inevitable in church leadership. Also, the new Christian probably will not have the knowledge base to be in a leadership or teaching position. We are recommending that a new Christian be given 1 year before they are allowed to assume a leadership or teaching position in the church.



#### Further suggestions

A couple of other things are important as the new Christian assimilates into serving ministry within the local church.

- First, we need to make sure that the new Christian has a mentor in the area in which they are serving. Whether it is an age level ministry (such as children or teen ministry) or a skilled ministry (such as worship team or volunteering in the office), the new Christian needs a mentor in the ministry in which they will be serving. This allows the new Christian to develop another strong relationship with a matured Christian and helps them to continue growing.
- Second, the new Christian needs to know the requirements that are associated with the volunteer position. They need to know exactly what is expected of them and how often they are expected to do it. If these details are made clear to the new Christian then from the start, then resentment and burn-out will not be as likely. But, if these details are not made clear, then resentment and burn-out are more likely.



#### Positive outcomes

There are many positive aspects about getting the young Christian involved in ministry after 6 months – 1 year of discipleship.

- The first is that the young Christian is given an opportunity to apply what they are learning about the Christian life. They are able to serve and to

love and to engage in the life of the church in a meaningful way. The young Christian is also beginning to understand what church life is like and is gaining experience and knowledge through their roles. They are able to contribute to the kingdom of God through the local church.

- Service within the local church also helps the young Christian to experience the connection between loving God and loving neighbor. This involvement forms the young Christian in such a way that they begin to understand that the spiritual life is one of balance and includes not only proper relationships with God, but also with people. This also, in turn, helps the young Christian to understand that the spiritual life is one of self-giving (as indicated in Philippians 2:5-11).
- Lastly, service in the local church is another avenue in which solid relationships with other Christians are built. Christians who are like-minded and have similar gifts are able to develop a relationship with this new Christian.



### **Leadership, Evangelism, and Teaching**

(It is assumed that the local church will be working with the new believer to become a member of the church. However, in the interest of time and because of denominational variances, we have omitted this from our presentation.)

After the new Christian has been consistently engaged in some level of service in the church for a year, then we would recommend leading them into deeper steps of commitment. The young Christian may be poised and gifted to become a leader in the church. If they are ready, then we should not hinder them from doing so. God has gifted some people with the gift of leadership and if the young Christian is ready to become a leader, then the church ought to provide opportunities for them to practice leadership.

While some new Christians will show leadership ability, *every* Christian should be involved in evangelism.

**Comic:** Witnessing (on Power Point)

- While established Christians may often exhibit these feelings about witnessing, new Christians are often excited to share their faith. Although we should not hinder them from doing so early, churches need to equip them in this once their faith has taken root. This will probably be a natural fit for the young Christian because they are excited about their new found faith. Often young Christians are the most willing and excited to evangelize.

Churches can capitalize on that willingness by providing training and opportunities to engage in evangelism. The church could also provide some basic apologetic training for the young Christian so that they will be able to accurately represent and defend the beliefs they hold to be true. Each of these training opportunities will allow the convert to come full-circle and spread the

Good News that they have received.

This last step is essential if the church is to survive and continue multiplying. (Ephesians 4:11-13) The church must train young Christians in how to evangelize and deliver the Good News to their friends. We cannot assume that this will come naturally to them. If the church fails to equip the young Christian in these areas, then the young Christian will either become stagnant or will simply leave the church. Growth in the Christian life never stops. The young Christian ought to be challenged to grow in love for both God and neighbor. And this challenge should come from their church.

Now the young Christian is poised to begin teaching. As people make decisions to follow Jesus and as they get plugged into the church, the young Christian now has the opportunity to disciple those brand new converts just like he or she was discipled. The young Christian is now able to meet with these Christians one-on-one teaching them and encouraging them in the same way that they were encouraged after they made their decision to follow Christ. Discipleship has now come full circle and the once new convert is now a committed and active disciple.



### **Concluding challenge**

We have covered a lot here today, so in conclusion, let's step back and look at the main ideas:

1. As the church, we are commanded to make *disciples* who know and understand what God expects of His people. (Matthew 28:19-20)  
This is the biblical foundation for all that we have talked about today.
2. Once a person has committed their heart and life to Christ, it is important that we involve them in two key activities:
  - *One-on-One* training (undershepherding). In this setting, the new believer will be given an opportunity to share their progress as well as struggles. They will also be grounded in Bible study and prayer as well as given the opportunity to ask any questions they might have.
  - *Small groups* such as Sunday School will give the new believer a sense of community and belonging as well as a chance to explore other areas of Bible study or Christian living that are not covered in the One-on-One times.
3. Once the new believer has been established in their faith to a degree, they should begin feeling a desire to serve in the church community. This is an important step, and the discipler should help the new Christian find a place where they are fulfilled in ministry and can apply the concepts they have been learning. This is the beginning of their experience in the principles of loving God and neighbor through ministry.

4. The final step in discipling involves guiding the Christian into positions of leadership and evangelism within the church. Personal evangelism training, lessons in apologetics, and other types of “Continuing Lay Training” are key to equipping the person for the work of evangelism.

Now, many of the time frames specified in our plan are suggestions. Each person is different. One person may require more time than another before engaging in service, while another may be ready earlier. It is important that we are “keyed in” to the individual, paying attention to their needs as well as their growth, while remembering the safety and precautionary ideas discussed above.

Once you *have* reached this final step with the new Christian, the cycle has come full circle – the seed has grown into a somewhat mature flower, which, with continued nurturing from the Word, worship, fellowship, and other sources of instruction, will reproduce itself through personal evangelism.



As we go from this short time together, may we be challenged to intentional discipling. When Jesus called Simon and Andrew, he said, “Come, follow me, *and I will make you* fishers of men.” (Mark 1:17, NIV, italics added) The call did not stop with the command to follow, but included the concept of transformation. This transformation is the process of discipleship. May we all take seriously Jesus’ command to *make disciples*.