

# DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY

community   
CHURCH

Hey, you discipling wonder!

**Additional resources at [mpcc.org/discipleship](http://mpcc.org/discipleship)**

You've said "yes" to leading at Community Church. Perhaps you are leading a community group or you simply want to help others discover how to follow Christ—regardless of the reason, this is call for celebration. Your willingness to push the discipling culture forward in our community will change the spiritual trajectory of many, many lives. Believe that? It's true. Think ripple effect, dominos, and a great Jesus groundswell.

## It's coming.

*"The time has come," he [Jesus] said, "The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" Mark 1:15.*

## Why Disciple?

We're running after a discipling culture—one that's bursting with disciple-making disciples who know how to introduce people to Jesus, grow them in his maturity, and reveal the freedom he brings. A community group is a great way to get there. Our goal is that community groups will help create a movement of disciple-making disciples because they've been taught how to lead and reveal God's grace and truth.

### Discipling Culture

An ever-expanding community where many who have been trained in the character and competency of Jesus train others who train others. Pursuing a life that looks like Jesus is a common goal. It's sought after above and beyond any other cultural expectations or interests. It leads to thousands of seekers becoming disciples growing in his likeness.

What if Central Michigan gets overrun by people who live like Jesus, and are equipped to help others live the same way? What could we do? What couldn't we do?

*"For the creation waits in eager anticipation for the children of God to be revealed." Romans 8:19-21*

## What's a Good Disciple?

A disciple looks like Jesus in both character and competence. The way He acted, we're acting. The way He loved, we love. The way He brought freedom, we do, too.

*"As you go, proclaim this message: The Kingdom of Heaven has come near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give." Matthew 10:7-9*

Looking like Jesus in character means considering how we treat others, how we live when no one's looking, and prioritizing the things he prioritized like maturity, rest, holiness, family, community, generosity and mission. We'll know this is happening by the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

A good disciple is rooted in relationship: with God, ourselves, others and Creation.

The Fall compromised those relationships, and the result is poverty—physical, emotional, relational and spiritual. We all suffer from poverty, and the only solution to that brokenness is the power of Jesus' death and resurrection to put all things in right relationship again. God's plan is restoration.

What's that mean for a disciple? A disciple fights poverty by actively maturing in relationship with Jesus, actively discipling others and reconciling what has been broken and following Jesus' lead of taking care of the under-resourced at cost to ourselves and our earthly idols. What an honor!

### **What makes a Good Discippler?**

By nature, discipling someone implies you have more knowledge and training than they do. In the regular world, that generally gives you grounds for bossing someone around. In the Kingdom, we're actually to think of ourselves as servants.

As a discipler, your goal is to empower the people you lead to be more prayerful, more anointed, more skilled, and greater in the Kingdom than you are. The ambition to create a whole bunch of people who will outrank you is one of humility. This journey is between your participants and God—you're just the fortunate assistant to that process.

You're also like a big brother/sister type; they need to hear from you. They need your leadership.

## **Use this guide.**

**This resource is split into three parts.**

- 1.) Gospel Fluency.** Understanding and the ability to easily share the gospel is foundational to the life of every believer.
- 2.) The Story of God.** How does your story fit into God's story? The mission of God throughout history is broken down over 10 weeks.
- 3.) The Shapes.** Practical and easy to remember ways of discussing and growing in the life of a disciple.

There is freedom in how you tackle the material with your group. Assess the needs of those you are discipling tackle the material systematically.

**Here are some additional tips on how to use this guide.**

**Be a practitioner.** Stretch yourself to grow. The farther you go, the farther you lead.

**Ask questions.** If you don't understand something, ask someone who leads you or email us at [groups@mpcc.org](mailto:groups@mpcc.org).

**Repent to your group often.** Model brokenness and receiving in a way that inspires them to do the same. Make them love to repent and turn to it quickly because of your example.

**Be a team player.** We're building a culture, which means we're in this together. Don't take shortcuts or disregard things you find in this book you don't prefer or understand. Trust it and give it a try. If after you've tried, you don't like it, let's talk.

**Discipling Culture:** a community where many who have been trained in the character and competency of Jesus train others who train others. The goal of pursuing a life that looks like Jesus is realized and sought after above and beyond any other cultural expectations or interests.

To create a culture where people look like Jesus and make others who do the same, we have to be intentional about personally moving through the process. Groups move us, and over time, the impact of these discipling relationships have the ability to create a culture of discipleship that can change our city and our world. If we're really following Jesus and growing in his character and competency, we should expect that level of transformation and run after it.

### **Language**

In a Community Group, we're teaching people the language of a body of growing Christ-followers who are expanding the Kingdom in full submission to the King (who also happens to be our dad!). Using common language helps band together and create culture.

### **Rhythms**

Rhythms support a culture's priorities. Without intentional processes set into place, priorities will fall by the wayside and other things will begin to creep in and take hold and focuses will shift. Every culture has traditions, calendars, holidays and rhythmic anchors their community observes that form, unite and deepen the heart of what they're about.

### **Boldness**

Confidence comes from knowing God intimately. From there, we can know the authority we have and the gifts He's given us to move his Kingdom forward. Jesus told his disciples to not move until they received the power of the Spirit. We can't move in boldness until we have spent time receiving the language God has given us, practicing the rhythms required to be connected to him and producing his good fruit. When we do, boldness and power naturally follows.

### **Reproduction**

To reproduce our faith we have to continually let God disciple us, know what spiritual health looks like, know how to identify those God wants us to invest in and actually do it. This isn't a one-time thing, but a lifelong pursuit of continually making disciples who know how to do the same.

### **All Together**

Built on one another, group participants will go through the stages of growth and become equipped to walk others into a relationship with Jesus and train others to do the same.

## **Organized and Organic**

### **Organized (Group) ----- Organic (Access)**

A Community Group is the organized aspect of discipleship that provides intentional training and accountability. It's a leadership tool, but on its own it's not enough.

We don't just invite someone into our group, we invite them into our lives. Jesus traveled with, ate with, taught with and spent most of his time with his disciples. (There were the occasional bathroom breaks and alone times for prayer, but other than that they pretty much hung out all the time.)

This imitation-of-life piece is crucial. Paul told the church in Corinth, "Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through





the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me.” 1 Corinthians 4:15-16

Groups are the organized part of the spectrum, but if someone intends to follow us, they need some organic access time, too—even when the kids are screaming or your roommate’s sprawled out on the couch.

Being in our group might give them a chance to see how well we understand the Bible or how well we can facilitate a group. They can tell if we have great insight or can handle a tough situation, but to see us as a disciple requires much more. We want to invite them into seeing how we treat our spouse, raise our kids, work our jobs, manage our schedules, rest, play and abide with God, grow in our gifts and learn to look like Jesus in the day-to-day. That’s where the true imitation can take place.

Meeting as a group to anchor the week and provide room for training and accountability completes the picture of discipleship that fosters growth.

## You Have Influence

Most simply, leadership is influence. If part of being a disciple is making disciples, that means every believer is going to grow in leadership as a result—because in our culture, the whole world is walking one direction. Just being a disciple of Jesus means taking a stand and choosing to turn the other way and walk against the current. A disciple- making disciple goes one step further. They ask others to come with them. They begin influencing the world around them, committed to making disciples. They begin making other people who choose Jesus over the promises of the world, and know how to make others who do the same.

Whether we’re going to influence thousands of people, raise our kids well, or bring one person to know God in our lifetime, people who love Jesus are called to lead others to know him, too. This requires believing a call of leadership (influence) for our lives. We’re not talking the standard leadership cliches, because the word “leader” has caused a lot of hurt over the years. Based on a limited number of qualities, someone might have been named “not a leader.” Not only may it have caused hurt and rejection, but it led to their gifts getting buried instead of reproduced and many disciples having far too small a vision for their lives.

Everything God has given us was meant to be reproduced. We want to be people who reproduce our money, gifts, faith and maturity in others. We take what we have (a gift, talent, faith) and multiply it by infusing the influence available to us to provide a great return on God’s investment in us. But just being a believer doesn’t make that process intuitive. That’s where a community group comes in. It takes followers and develops them in the leadership skills needed to reproduce whatever God has given them in their spheres of influence all over our community.

## **Before you begin**

This is not a set formula for discipleship. This is not a set of rules, and it's definitely not about the shapes. It is about tools for you to use as you partner with the Spirit to move someone forward in their spiritual growth.

The end goal of a discipleship process is to create disciple-making disciples. In a group, we invite and challenge people to look more like Jesus through a series of tools. Those tools just so happen to create a common language that dramatically increases culture development. Building a discipling culture unites and strengthens us as a body enabling us to more powerfully reach the world.

If major life issues are leaking out in your group (or years worth of un-tended-to hearts are coming undone), that's OK—and expected. Most of us don't take time to regularly process everything we're hearing from God in an accountable environment. Validate people where they are, but don't feel pressure to fix (or even process) everything that's coming out this early. Just listen reflectively and continue to lead your group. Don't worry, you've got this!

**Additional resources at [mpcc.org/discipleship](https://mpcc.org/discipleship)**



# GOSPEL FLUENCY

Speaking the gospel into the Everyday Stuff of Life

Even if they want to, many Christians find it hard to talk to others about Jesus. Is it possible this difficulty is because we're trying to speak a language we haven't actually spent time practicing?

To become fluent in a new language, you must immerse yourself in it until you actually start to think about life *through* it. Becoming fluent in the gospel happens the same way—after believing it, we have to intentionally rehearse it (to ourselves and to others) and immerse ourselves in its truths. Only then will we start to see how everything in our lives, from the mundane to the magnificent, is transformed by the hope of the gospel.

A clear understanding and ability to communicate the gospel is foundational to the process of discipleship. Here are four simple and progressive steps for us to think about the good news. **Here is a four-part breakdown that will help you breakdown how to share the gospel:**

## 1. It's not about you

The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you begin with God. You were made by God and for God and until you understand that, life will not make sense.

## 2. The reality of Sin

You don't have to look around too hard to see that we live in a broken world. Turn on the 6 o'clock news and see the devastation that sin has caused on this planet. But you don't even have to keep up with the news, just look in the mirror. We all struggle with sin. Roman 6:23 says "The wages of sin is death." That's what we deserve. That's bad news.

## 3. Jesus Christ – the Good News (God's plan for restoration)

Roman 6:23 continues... "The wages of Sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord"

There was no way, God could leave things broken – he has interrupted, intervened, he has flung himself into the thick of the problem.

This is the good news. This is the Gospel of Grace. A God, who out of his love for us, sent his only Son, taking on the form of humanity. He lived on this earth, preached the good news of the gospel, was ultimately lashed with a whip, fixed to a cross, and died whispering forgiveness on us all.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life."

## 4. Follow Him (New Life)

Christianity is so much more than just some passive theory or idea. The Gospel story looks you in the eye and says – so what? What is your response?

Jesus walks up to these fishermen and simply says; "follow me". And they dropped their nets and followed. It starts like this – from your heart, commit to follow God. You simply need to follow him.

## Training Gospel Fluency

Visit [mpcc.org/gospel](http://mpcc.org/gospel) and view the Gospel Video from Pastor Alan that reviews these four parts.

Open Dialogue: What stood out to you? What surprised you? Elaborate on what certain elements meant.

Break into groups practice sharing the Gospel to each other. It does not matter if you mimic the video or if you make it more unique – just make sure; the key, essential pieces are in place. It may be helpful to create a fake context for people. For example – your non-Christian friend just returned from a funeral last week and has asked to speak with you because they know you are a churchy person. They approach you and ask that you share ‘what they need to know’ about God.

How did that go? Open conversation.

Answer the following questions live in the group (please role play)

- Why did Jesus have to die?
- How do we know we can trust this book, because you’re basing everything off what it says?
- Is it not good enough that I could just try my best to be a very good person?
- So, are you telling me... if I follow him, I have to go to church now and give money and help and serve? Is that what I have to do?
- My Dad died a few years ago and he never got this, he never prayed... is he in hell?

Practicing these scenarios will equip you to be able to share the gospel when the opportunity arises in the future.

Visit [mpcc.org/gospel](http://mpcc.org/gospel) and view the section on Two Word Story.

**Your story is also an effective way to share the gospel.** No one can question its authenticity because it’s your story... written, qualified, and told by you. It includes your journey coming to Christ and how others can also come to Christ.

Your story is significant! It’s unique to you and speaks of what has brought you to where you are today. In addition, your story has the ability to speak of God working in your life. A two-word story, or two-word testimony, can be told anywhere, any time, and it’s easy to remember!

**Think about your own Two-Word Story and practice sharing with your group or someone else.**

# THE STORYFORMEDWAY

As a church on mission we began to ask ourselves a clarifying question: “What is THE MISSION? What is the mission that Jesus gave his Church?” The surprisingly simple answer is, “GO, make disciples!” Discipleship is the mission. There are lots of different experiences, teaching and events that are part of accomplishing this mission, but we could not miss the fact that making disciples was our primary mission.

We believe the use of stories and times of deep, shared interaction are a historically proven and powerful way of helping people on their discipleship journey. We live in stories. Stories are the language of our world. Stories speak to the mind, the body, the emotions—our spirits. In a story, we can identify with situations we have never been in. Our imagination can be unlocked to dream what before was unimaginable. Together we learn about life as we connect through stories.

We all yearn to know many of the same parts of the Story...

*What happened before time began? How did all of this start?  
Who or what created me!?  
Why do I exist?  
Does my life really matter, does it have meaning? To who?  
What happens after I die?  
Why is the world the way it is...? Things don't seem to be going that well...*

The Storyformed Way was created to be a starting point of discipleship. It is a 10 week journey through the Story with times of dialogue, interaction and reflection that serve as a foundation for new disciples (anyone you are in a relationship with) and gives more mature disciples an easy, reproducible method for introducing groups of people (or an individual) to the claims of Christ and what it means to be a disciple.

Channels of learning that will be introduced and reinforced throughout The Storyformed Way include:

- Creation
- The Nature of Sin
- Atonement
- Grace
- Faith
- Attributes of God
- The Holy Spirit—The Person and Work
- Jesus—The Person and Work
- Lordship of Christ
- The Trinity
- The Kingdom of God
- The Gospel
- Gospel Identity and Cultural Rhythms
- Community
- God's Election of the Saints
- Sonship (God as our Father)
- Stewardship
- Biblical Manhood / Womanhood
- Prayer
- Social Justice
- The Sovereignty of God
- Forgiveness and Guilt
- Evangelism
- End Times (Eschatology)

**You can find everything you need to lead a group through the Story Formed Way in the supplemental resources available at [mpcc.org/discipleship](http://mpcc.org/discipleship).**



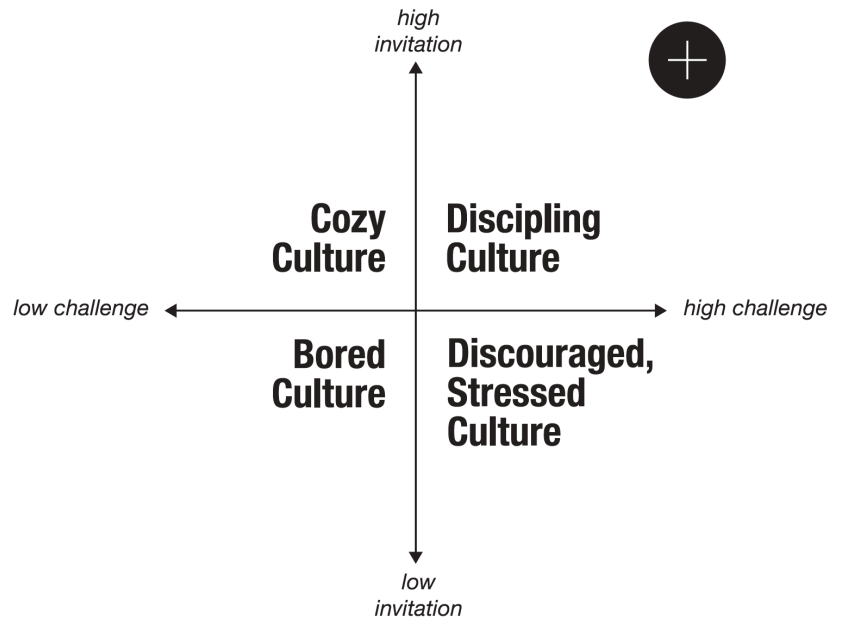
# THE SHAPES

As part of our discipleship process, we are breaking down seven pictures of the life of Jesus into what we call Shapes. Each of these is a characteristic or competency of Jesus illustrated with a shape (memorable teaching tool).

They are:

	INTERVAL CONCEPT	PICTURE	SCRIPTURE REFERENCE	POINT
1	Invitation & Challenge		Matthew 16:17–25 Matthew 19:16–30	Jesus made disciples by inviting them into his life and challenging them to look more like him in their beliefs and actions.
2	Hearing & Doing		Mark 1:14–15 James 2:14;17–18	God breaks into our daily lives with kairos moments. Our response should be to listen to what he's telling us, repent, believe and obey in community.
3	Covenant & Kingdom		<i>Covenant:</i> Psalms 103, Ephesians 3:6, Exodus 19:5–6, Romans 8:15–17, 1 John 4:4–7, John 15:16, Jeremiah 31:3 <i>Kingdom:</i> Psalms 93:1–2, Matthew 28:18, Luke 10:19, Mark 16:16–18	God relates to us through both covenant and kingdom. We come to Him through covenant relationship, gaining our identity as his children, that motivates us to obedience. With that understanding of who he is, we surrender to Him as our King, and gain his authority and power to be fruitful and advance his kingdom.
4	Work From Rest		Genesis 1:26–2:3, John 15:1–8	God established a natural order for how we can live a fruitful life that starts with learning to work from rest. We find it when we learn to abide.
5	UP/IN/OUT		Luke 6:12–19	A balanced life includes a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the body (IN), and reaching the world (OUT).
6	Learning & Leading Well		Mark 10:42–45 Mark 1:15–20 (stage 1) Luke 12:32–34 (stage 2) John 15:12–17 (stage 3) Matthew 28:18–20 (stage 4)	Jesus led through serving. He understood where his disciples were and adapted his leadership style accordingly. He understood the need to meet them where they were and how to move them forward in maturity.
7	Generosity		1 Chronicles 29:11–17 1 Timothy 6:10 Matthew 6:21	We're rich—with money that isn't ours. Figure out what Jesus would do with "your" money if he were you, and how to live generously and overcome idols with surrender.

# 1 INVITATION & CHALLENGE



## HOW TO TEACH INVITATION & CHALLENGE

Jesus was both invitational and challenging—knowing how to both draw people in and challenge them towards growth. Whether it’s through parables (Luke 15), serving in the midst of conflict and tension (John 13:1-17), or giving someone a promotion and immediately rebuking (Matthew 16:13-28), Jesus lives in the brilliant balance of invitation and challenge. For us to train people to look more like Jesus, we need to push for that same balance. But it’s not easy, and we generally lean to one side or the other.

### High Invitation + Low Challenge = A Cozy Culture

If we sit here, we get comfortable, forget mission and lose our edge spiritually. We weren’t meant to be cozy. Being sharpened to regularly look more and more like Jesus is a vital part of growth.

Response: What does it look like to add challenge here?

### Low Invitation + Low Challenge = A Bored Culture

Nobody sticks around here. Anyone who does slowly deteriorates and dies out. We’re wired for more. Response: What does it look like to increase invitation and challenge here?

### High Challenge + Low Invitation = A Stressed, Discouraged Culture

When there is plenty to do or grow in, but the environment lacks encouragement, the culture can’t be sustained. It will burn out.

Response: What does it look like to increase invitation?

### High Invitation + High Challenge = A Discipling Culture

This is where Jesus lived, and this is the world we want to get to know. As leaders, invitation allows us to nurture our group and mirrors God’s covenant side. Challenge helps us move them closer to what God is uniquely saying to them and mirrors the God’s kingdom side.

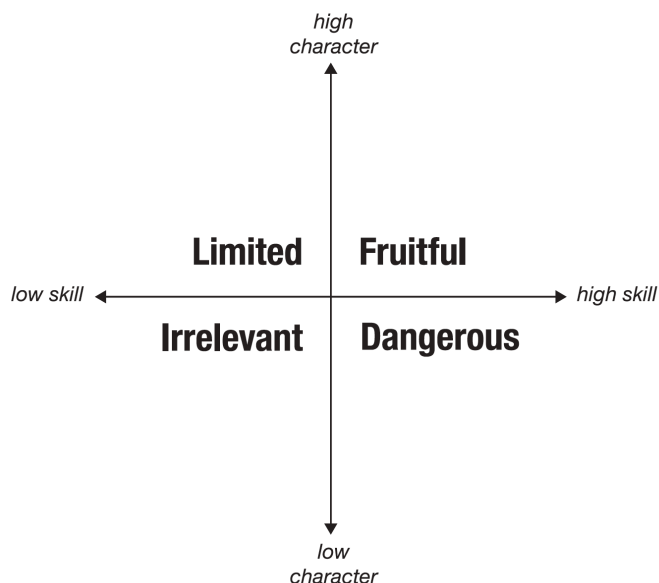
The Invitation and Challenge matrix makes it clear what our action step is when we're outside the discipling quadrant. However, moving quadrants isn't easy and usually takes some pioneering and hard change. These rough patches should be expected, not avoided. As you lead, be clear that movement requires endurance and vision—and completely relies on Jesus. We don't strive or force our way into the discipling culture; we lean heavily into the Spirit to be formed into it. And any movement is a win.

Before you meet, consider this:

- Where do you lean as an individual?
- Where does your family lean?
- Where does your ministry or workplace lean?
- Where does our group lean?

## Character / Skills Matrix

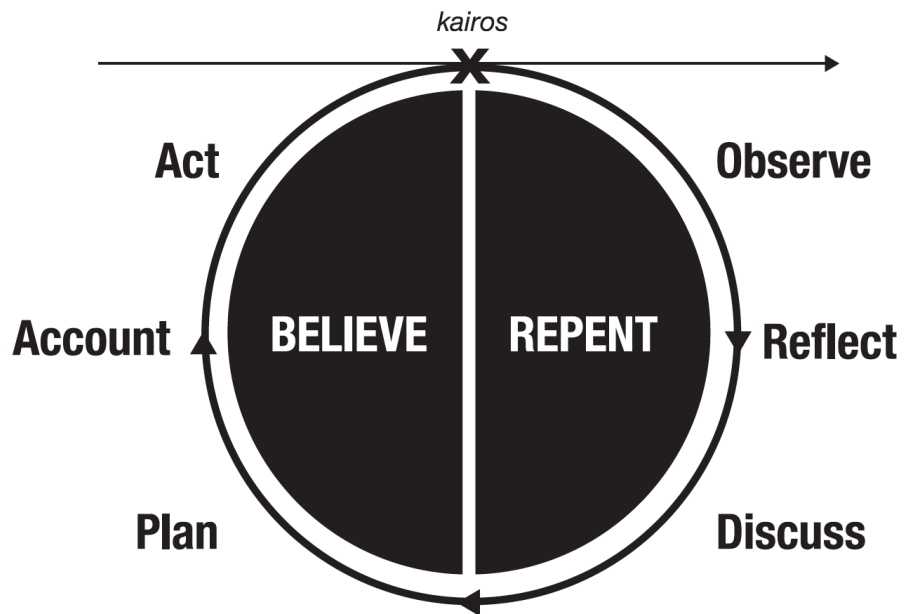
Using this matrix is a fantastic way to open up and get to know each other. You'll get to model vulnerability—because the more honest you are, the more honest they will be.



CHARACTER UP	CHARACTER IN	CHARACTER OUT
Do I make enough space for prayer?	Do I love the Church?	Do I have a heart for people who don't know God?
Do I pursue intimacy with Jesus?	Is time a blessing or a curse?	How often do I share my faith?
What is on my heart for intercession?	Am I resting enough?	Do I leave time for relationships with non-believers?
Am I living in the power of the Spirit?	How are my relationships with my friends?	Am I running the race with perseverance?
Am I personally experiencing revival?	Am I experiencing intimacy in my relationships?	Do I have a vision?
Do I still feel pleasure?	Do I keep my promises?	Am I dying to success?
Do I regularly experience peace (even in chaos)?	How easy is it for me to trust people?	Am I proud of the Gospel or ashamed?
Am I afraid or nervous?	Am I discipling others?	Am I a servant?
Am I obedient to God's prompting?	Is my family happy?	Do I find it easy to recognize people of peace?
	Am I sleeping/eating well?	Can I take risks?
	Am I making myself vulnerable to others?	

# 2.

## THE LEARNING CIRCLE



### HOW TO TEACH THE LEARNING CIRCLE

*"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"*  
Mark 1:15

The repent and believe circle gives us a framework of steps for how to listen, process and respond to God's voice. It's mighty important, and we can use it again and again in how we approach God. The more trained we are to use it, the more deeply we'll put it into practice and naturally lead others to do the same.

**Attention:** You are at a very important shape.

This tool has the potential to be referenced again and again and again as you lead people through discipleship. The way it's taught can either lead people to believe it's an OK tool they may or may not connect with, or a powerful game changer in how we approach God. The more trained we get in using it personally, the more deeply we can put it into practice and the more naturally we can lead others to do the same. It's the tool that allows us to help people recognize God's voice and move forward in obedience.

If our participants don't get the circle, it'll be hard for us to help them identify what they're hearing and know what to do with it. They'll still of course be hearing, but it's the process of recognizing what they're hearing and knowing what to do with it that will be challenged.

So whatever topic we're on, we'll always be looking for and sharing kairos moments.

As with all shapes, begin with your story and scripture. How does Jesus walk people through "aha!" moments? Does He seem to repeatedly hit on certain elements? Can you give a story from your own life that worked that way?

If taught badly, the Circle can seem like a just OK self help tool for those who like that sort of thing. So when you teach it, we recommend taking time to walk through each element and discuss it in depth to cast vision and help people take ownership of the concepts. Make it fun, let everyone weigh in, create debate, pry at the importance of each element and see where conversation leads. Laying a

solid foundation for the value of the Circle is a critical part of getting buy-in and interest in your group for what's to come. Test that your group believes in it and understands its value.

## Teaching the Circle

Walking through the Circle once or having someone explain it generally misses the mark if you're trying to inspire. Instead, try this exercise that deepens faith in the concepts and creates ownership of it as a tool. Begin to teach the circle starting with Mark 1:15, but pause on each element and have the group tease out what it means and why it's important.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" MARK 1:15

## Time = Kairos

The word "time" in this passage was actually the word "kairos". When we engage in daily living and notice a moment where something feels different or significant (no, it's not what you ate for lunch), it feels somehow important. Big or small, good or bad, God often catches our attention in a kairos moment.

- What is a "kairos moment?" Give people space to discuss and find an answer together.  
(Answers: a moment—not a chronological minute— where time seems to stand still and / or the Kingdom of God breaks in.)
- What's the Kingdom?  
(Answers: Anywhere God's will is done, not just in heaven but on earth, too; the sphere in which the King reigns.)

When the God of the universe breaks into our lives, it's significant. He asks us things like, "Are you with me? Do you agree? Will you go with me there?" It's our chance to say, "Sure am. You're King. I'm in. Where are we going?"

That means a kairos moment is an invitation to make God King—at that moment, in any given situation.

So any time the Kingdom of God breaks into our lives, we have a chance to follow what we see in Mark 1:15. We can turn and agree with God (repent) and choose to do something with it (believe).

## Repent

It's important to really understand these words. *Really important.* Discuss openly in depth. These questions are not rhetorical. Talk it out. Come to some conclusions as a group.

- What does the word "repent" mean? (To turn direction, change one's mind.)
- What emotions do you feel when you hear the word "repent"? (Give a feeling word, not a thinking statement.)
- If you have negative feelings associated with repent, why do you think that is? Why do we associate repentance with dread and guilt? (Really answer.)
- Are we meant to feel that way?
- If we resist repentance on any level, what does that mean we believe about ourselves?
- What does it mean we believe about God?



What happens when we don't repent? How does it impact our relationship with:

- God?
- Our community?
- Unbelievers around us?
- The Church?
- The Kingdom?

What are the benefits of choosing repentance? What effects does choosing humility have on:

- Us?
- Our relationship with God?
- Our relationship with others?
- On the world around us?

Take the time to get to a conclusion. Even if conversation slows down the pace of your group, these answers are worth it.

Once we acknowledge that repentance is meant to save us and there is peace there, we can actually look forward to engaging in it.

## **Believe**

A change of mind must come first. The head controls the whole body. When you change your mind, you can direct your whole body as a result. Changing requires movement. Learning something new isn't faith, we have to act on our new beliefs.

Look up James 1:22–25, Matthew 7:24–29 and 1 Corinthians 8:1b.

What do you observe in those passages? Who did Jesus grow most angry with in the New Testament? Why was he angry with them? What was their sin?

We have to take great care that we don't mistake our knowledge for faith or let kairos moments where God is speaking or teaching us something slip away unacknowledged. These are precious gifts!

## **There are 6 easy circle elements**

An easy way to engage in this process is by using six elements. Take time to walk through each element— observe, reflect, discuss, plan, account and act. Draw the circle, and slowly walk through what each element has to offer when we're processing what God is saying to us.

### **1.) Observe**

Getting to the heart of our kairos moment helps focus on the true spiritual issue without getting distracted by fluff.

The main question associated with observe is WHAT?

- What happened?
- What made you feel that way?
- What does that remind you of?
- What might that imply you believe?

If we start with a vague or shallow observation we'll likely develop a plan that reacts to the surface of the issue (fruit) and not the root. It's important to go a few layers into observing the true source of what's going on or what God might be trying to say. If you can't get to a deeper spot just by observation, no worries. Next we keep going with some reflection.

## 2.) Reflect

Reflect offers many of the same principles, but here the question changes from what to WHY.

- Why do those emotions come up?
- Why does God seem ?
- Why does this feeling feel familiar? When have you felt similarly before?

We want to find the root cause. Often, the first emotions we pinpoint aren't the truest expression of what we're really feeling.

For example, anger is rarely a primary emotion. It could actually be hurt, jealousy, rejection or something totally different. Sometimes, it's easier and less painful to show anger, then it is to actually deal with the hurt that's driving it. The deeper we dig, the more likely we are to find places, memories and events that didn't just impact us once, they impact us still. We can move into new freedom by pulling up roots and avoiding temporary solutions that won't last.

## 3.) Discuss

Now the question to ask is WHO? Who is the safe/right person (or people) to talk through your observations and reflections with?

The goal is to run what we think we're hearing, by someone else who can validate, challenge, encourage and inspire more truth. Choose carefully, but don't skip it.

*Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results. James 5:16.*

If you're tempted to just work it out "between you and God" more often than not, consider why. We're often afraid to be vulnerable, appear "not together," feel like a burden or foolish. All of those reasons are lies from the enemy and share lots of common ground with our resistance to repent. We have to break down these lies. Left unexposed, our hearts can sometimes be very deceiving. We're fallen, so our natural state will default to sin. Being reminded of that stings, but that's why our Father, the King's mercy is so amazing.

It's healthy to invite others in to ensure we're hearing truth and to share what God is doing in us and the rest of the body.

We're not meant to carry it alone, and we rarely are alone.

Often, someone else feels or has felt it too. Sharing helps us and those around us in countless ways.

## Observe + Reflect + Discuss = What is God saying?

We want to perpetually be asking, God what are You saying? We want to hear His voice and make our plans based on that.

#### 4.) Plan

Making a plan is how we put our faith into action. It doesn't help to have a new a-ha about God if we do nothing about it. (In fact, the more we know, the more liable we are spiritually. It can be dangerous ground to know and not act.)

If kairos moments really are happening all the time, the idea of constantly planning can feel exhausting. It's really important to be clear that we're not talking about making huge new plans all the time. Plans don't mean resolution. They're just one small step towards faithfulness, and can be as simple as asking:

- What's one thing I can do today to increase my faith in x?
- What's one way I can spend five more minutes reminding myself of y each day?
- Who's one person I can encourage this week?"

The question with Plan is HOW. Specifically, how are you going to do something new? Sitting in ambiguity would lead to plans that sound like:

- Focus more on God this week
- Try to forgive
- Rest more

We want to make tangible plans that really can be accomplished. We won't solve all our problems with one little plan, but we can be regularly taking steps of obedience that change who we are and conform us more and more into the image of God.

If we're being specific, we might say:

- Spend an extra 10 minutes each morning asking God what he has to say.
- Pray one new blessing on someone's who's hurt me each day this week.
- Cancel everything going on for one day this week and have a Sabbath.

#### 5.) Account

Accountability is asking people to help us follow through. We can't do this alone and the blessing of Discuss means there is someone there to help. The key is that we have to ask.

Asking for accountability is a humbling and powerful way of moving forward. To verbally ask someone else often leads to a higher level of ownership in us.

This may or may not be the WHO from Discuss. It helps if it's someone who can watch and hold accountable in the moment. Be sure to write down any plan that comes out of a kairos moment in your group. Then be sure to follow up and ask them how it went.

#### 6.) Act

Move. Whether it's big or small, clumsy or well-done, God loves our attempts to look more like him. Take what you heard God say and try to do something about it.

It's easy to believe that if we know it, we're walking in it. Knowing and doing are two very different things.

When we believe in God's goodness, we know he'll never ask something of us that isn't in our best interest. So trust him, and move.

**Plan + Account + Act = What am I going to do about it?**

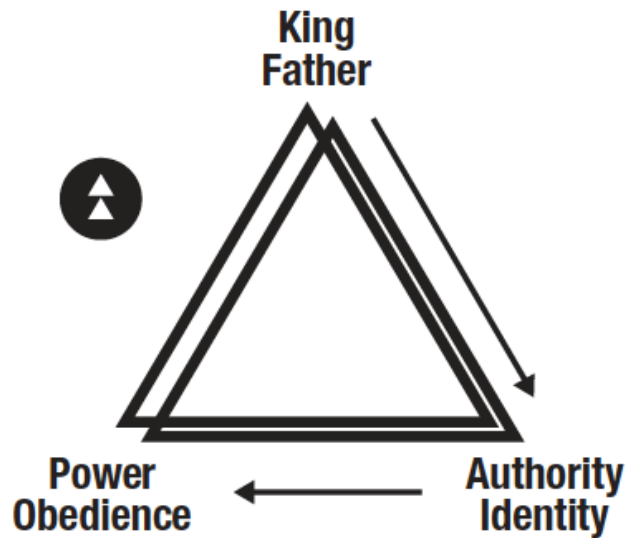
When we really take something around the circle, the line that represents our life is no longer on the same path. It's moving in a new direction—one that displays faith and genuine life change as we clumsily but faithfully attempt to look more like Jesus.

**DON'T FORGET:**

You'll rarely teach the circle by drawing it out and explaining it fully. Probably only when you're introducing initially, and even then—be sure the emphasis is on Mark 1:15, not the circle as the source. The rest of the time, just employ the principles. We want to know how to teach it, but most of the time, we'll simply use it as a guide to processing repentance and steps of faith.

# 3

## COVENANT & KINGDOM



### HOW TO TEACH COVENANT AND KINGDOM

This shape is about maturing our understanding of God—as both Father and King. We'll read the Bible through this Covenant and Kingdom lens, deepening our faith in the fullness of God's identity and considering how it impacts our relationship with him.

#### Covenant = Oneness

The Hebrew word for covenant means oneness or unfettered union. It's a union that far supersedes the concept of a friendship or contract; a bond between a stronger and weaker party that permanently combines their identity and resources, generally marked with a scar that reminded them to be faithful, and often a new name.

#### Kingdom = Representation

The area in which the King reigns, beginning spiritually then manifesting physically, expressed through those who hold a covenant relationship with God and share his vision for his will being done on earth, a call to co-owning the responsibility of bringing heaven to earth, representing the Father's character, and expanding his territory in a broken world.

In attempts to simplify the magnitude of who God is, we sometimes compartmentalize the different aspects of God's character and value one over another. For some, God as a holy judge is the predominant character trait they believe and relate to God through. For others, God as all loving and all accepting may be the only way they view God.

When we choose one over the other, it diminishes the fullness of who God is and how we fully engage with him. He is both Father and King. He deeply loves us and wants to give us purpose and direction by enlisting us in his mission to advance his goodness in others.

It is a crazy concept to know God as both a father we can receive unconditional love from and a King to whom it's 100% appropriate to get on our knees and bow before.



## HUG & BOW

Romans 2:4 says it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance. Not his judgment, wrath or rejection, but his kindness. He tells us he is our Abba, our daddy, who adopts us and calls us his children. He's also still God: the creator of the universe, the be all, end all, full of power and might, perfectly holy, and worthy to be praised.

If we don't understand him simultaneously as both, we're left with a confusing faith. There are huge portions of the Bible that speak to both sides of his character, so if we're missing one part, we're left to ignore, dismiss, or just flat out rebel against those attributes when we encounter them. When we don't understand him as King, we miss out on obedience. When we don't understand him as Father, we miss out on intimacy.

Understanding God as a good Father leads us to deep intimacy with him. When we engage with God as our King, obedience follows. Both are gifts, and we were wired for both. Choosing only one of those options can leave us immature and can stand in direct conflict with growing as a disciple.

**God is a loving Father and powerful King who wants to interact with us both in covenant relationship and Kingdom partnership.**

## FATHER

Every earthly father disappointed us in some way and failed to represent God's character perfectly. Some fathers abandoned, abused or avoided their children as a result of their own hurts and pain. Whether it was workaholicism, passivity, addiction, anger, violence, adultery or countless other examples, in our culture the word "father" sadly carries more negative connotations than positive ones.

Some signs you might struggle with knowing God as Father:

- Discomfort with calling him Abba (Daddy)
- Resisting intimacy with God
- Struggling to rest and abide
- Desiring more approval from God or others
- Lacking elements of your relationship with God that deal with emotions
- Forgetting to run to God as a first source of healing and comfort
- Dismissing the idea that he cares about each part of your day and wants to be intimately involved in your life
- Not believing he loves you like crazy, made you on purpose, and wants to bless your life
- Memories of parents disciplining you more frequently than developing a relationship with you

## KING

There is no one in our lives who has the authority a true king would. Even the President of the United States can't dictate to us how we should live. He can't walk into the room and demand we stand on our head or send us to prison without reason, but a King could.

A King has total rule and reign over any area he's responsible for and everyone in it. By simply stepping over the border of his land, your life belongs to him and your obedience is required. The idea of a King having that type of authority over us is foreign at best and can even feel offensive.

That's the power God as King has, and it's the power that disciples choose to submit to on a daily basis when they make the choice to follow.

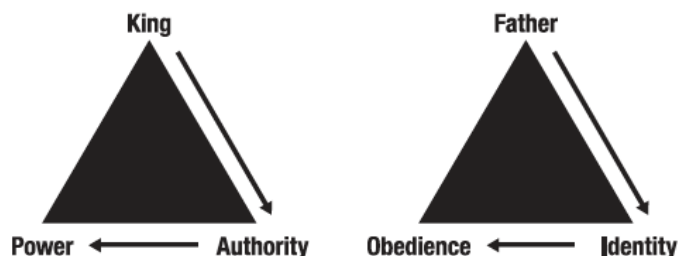
Some signs you might struggle with knowing God as King:

- Preferring the "New Testament God" over the "Old Testament God"
- Negotiating with God when he speaks to you about a sensitive topic
- Keeping some parts of your life "off limits" to his opinion
- Resisting or ignoring difficult passages of Scripture that don't seem very gracious
- Struggling to obey
- Resisting the idea that he has total authority over your life and that everything you have is his
- Feelings of entitlement or control
- Resisting earthly authorities
- Your parents operated more frequently with you as your friend than your authority who expected you to listen and obey

When we meet God as Father, we receive our identity as sons. A son isn't just a kid. A son is an heir. (Ladies, don't stress being called a son and not a daughter. It's important for us all to connect with the word "son" as heirs and the word "bride" as the Church, so it ends up being even!)

**We're designed to receive our identity from the Father. Then from a place of oneness with him, obedience can naturally follow.**

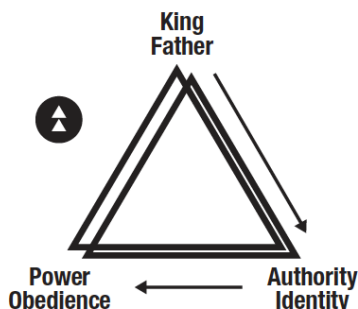
When we work backwards through the triangle, it pushes us to earn our identity through obedience (and that results in religion). The more we operate from our identity first, the more natural it becomes to obey because we are connected to the Father in a way that naturally produces actions that look like him.



**When we meet God as King, we understand his authority.** We realize that he has total authority but that he shares his authority with us. As we obey him, we align ourselves with his kingdom and so share the authority to continue spreading its territory through accomplishing his will. We can't spread the Kingdom without submitting to it first, nor can we share his authority without choosing to

sit under it. But when we do, we operate in partnership with him as he originally intended, receiving his authority and acting on his behalf in the world.

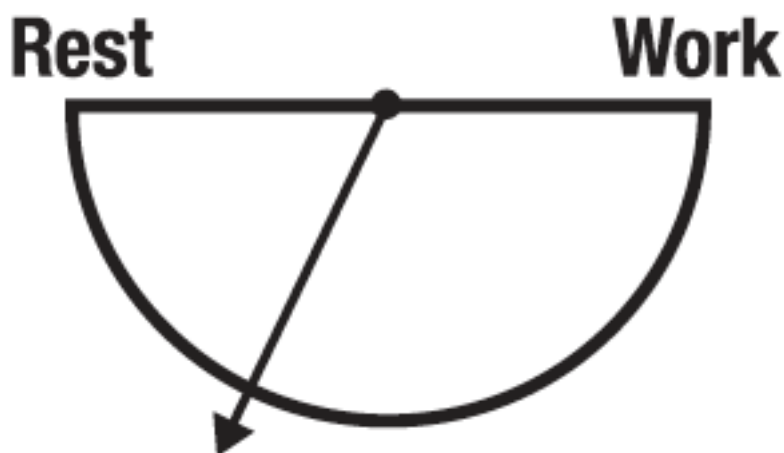
From authority, we find ourselves experiencing his power. The impact we have on the world is suddenly infused with power because we're no longer doing it on our own or in our own strength. Again, this triangle only works one way. We can't expect to shortcut the process and experience his power without moving first from his authority (which requires first submitting to his authority).



**When we understand him as both simultaneously, realizing he is calling us into covenant and kingdom relationship with him, we see the triangles as one.** From knowing him as Father and King, we receive our identity and his authority and move in obedience and power representing Covenant and Kingdom wherever we go.

# 4

## WORK FROM REST



### HOW TO TEACH WORK FROM REST

This shape is a countercultural big dog, with the potential to create lots of freedom. It ties directly to our mission as a church, **to lead people into a focused life with Jesus Christ**. Working from rest is central to the concept of the focused life. (Feel free to stay in this shape as long as you need.)

This concept is deep. It can be taught from many angles, and may require more time spent soaking it in before moving on than any other shape.

This concept isn't a reaction to our over-worked, burned out American culture. God has had this in the design from literally Day 1. From the Creation account, to the Ten Commandments, to John 15, we see the order he established and the design he intended our lives to display. It takes the shape of a natural swinging of a pendulum.

This shape introduces the first and maybe primary roadblock in being able to hear the Lord. Our culture is loud. We wear "busyness" as a badge of honor. When we're not at work, there's work at home. Even when we're with friends, we can be tempted to shift our minds to other areas and miss being present in the moment. We're distracted.

Hearing from God requires us to pause. Even "good" works we can do apart from God mean nothing. In fact, John 15 says it'll be burned up. This means if we're working at doing a lot of stuff that looks like God's Kingdom, but it's not coming from a place of actually hearing God tell us to do it, it's false fruit.

We want a community of pure, God-inspired, Spirit-led fruit. That starts with our ability to abide in both our rest and our work.

### Teaching the Semi-Circle

One of the best ways to understand what's important to God is to look at the major themes in his story. All throughout the Bible, resting and abiding come up a lot. Let's check out three of the biggest examples.

## **GENESIS 1: BEINGS NOT DOINGS**

From the very beginning of our creation, God beautifully displays his desire for us to partner with him in a productive life. In Genesis 1:27–2:3, He tells Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. He delights in their role of ruling over the creation he made. We see that even before the curse, work existed and it was valued. We were made to be productive, reproduce and bear much fruit.

In the midst of having a whole world of stewarding and filling to do, the very first thing God invited Adam and Eve to do was rest. We're called human beings (not doings) for a reason. God created us to be with him, and it's only from that place of being that anything productive can be done. We are made to work from rest.

The Jewish culture reflected this idea. Because the timing of a day was described in Genesis as night and then day, the Jews began their day at sundown. This allowed them to rest in the goodness of God, and then get up and work from that rested place.

In our culture, many of us throw ourselves onto the couch at the end of the day thankful to rest from our work, and call it normal. As a result, this concept can feel mind-blowing and backwards. In fact, you might experience some resistance. Perhaps you envision as normal, or even commendable, a high-level executive in the corporate world where working 80 hours a week is common, or a young mom whose entire life gets so absorbed by her kids' needs, rest seems impossible. It's worth calling out a few realities.

Learning to live by Jesus' example here will make us odd. We might work at jobs that glorify workaholicism. We might even find our worth in what we do. This will challenge all of that. God desires to return us to Eden and re-create us often. He loves to remind us of his original intent and build our hope for the ultimate Re-Creation still to come.

## **EXODUS 20: SONS NOT SLAVES**

This pattern God established didn't stop in Eden. God listed it in the Ten Commandments alongside murder and adultery in Exodus 20:8. The degree to which we take our workaholic tendencies lightly can be weighed directly against this passage. Why would God take rest so seriously?

This resting isn't sleep (although sleep can be a part of resting). This resting is:

- Dwelling with God
- Listening for His voice
- Believing He is our ultimate provider who rescued us from slavery, and who still promises to take care of us
- Remembering we can't do this on our own (and that's good news)
- Playing and having fun (Slaves and orphans don't get to play. Adopted children do.)

He wants to remind us that we are his kids, not his slaves. One of the ways he does that is by blessing us with rest.

In case that wasn't great enough news, it gets better.

## **JOHN 15: NATURAL FRUIT, NOT MANUFACTURED WORKS**

Jesus talks about this in John when he says, "I am the vine, you are the branch. If you remain in me and I in you, you'll bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing." —JOHN 15:5

God wants us to be productive, and it comes through abiding with our Father. If we're not resting and abiding with Him, we'll produce nothing. We see this undeniable pattern in nature: abide, grow, bear fruit, prune, abide. From abiding we grow, from growing we bear fruit, from bearing fruit we are pruned and retreat back to abiding.

If we look at the previous verse, John 15:2 says, "Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit." We see that there are rhythms to being connected to the vine. We're always connected but we have seasons of more fruitfulness and seasons of more abiding. And in the middle of those are seasons of pruning and growth.

Even the disciples went through a period of sitting under Jesus' leadership before they were empowered and sent out to be fruitful.

God not only called us to this rhythm but also illustrates it in nature for us to see. Rose bushes are cut back to nothing in order for them to flourish and produce more abundant flowers. Grape vines are cut back for two years in order for their root systems to be established. Only then can they handle the weight of an abundant crop of grapes. Let's be honest though. That "cutting back" spiritually is as painful as it sounds, but through these examples we can see it's not a punishment. It is a part of the process that builds us up to be stronger and more fruitful. The bigger the purpose, the bigger the play.

The natural swinging of the pendulum also illustrates what nature has been teaching us all along. If we want to produce great fruit or have big purpose, we have to pursue deep rest and great play to fuel it. Without it, we'll only be able to attain what our own abilities can muster (and that is not much!). Those resources always run out leaving us less productive, more broken and eventually less and less able to recover.

Like any pendulum, the harder it swings to one side, the harder it crashes into the other. Seasons of extreme work will always crash us back into forced rest. And seasons of too much rest dull us because we were meant to be fruitful. The goal is to learn to abide in peace and chaos, and balance our lives to a place where we can truly work from rest instead of needing to rest from our work.

The "balance" word can freak people out or tempt us to get religious. Of course, there will be some seasons with more rest and some with more work. There will be times God calls us to abide more than normal, and times where we feel his growing, pruning and producing more than normal. But ultimately, if we're listening, we can identify it and align ourselves with the natural rhythms He established.

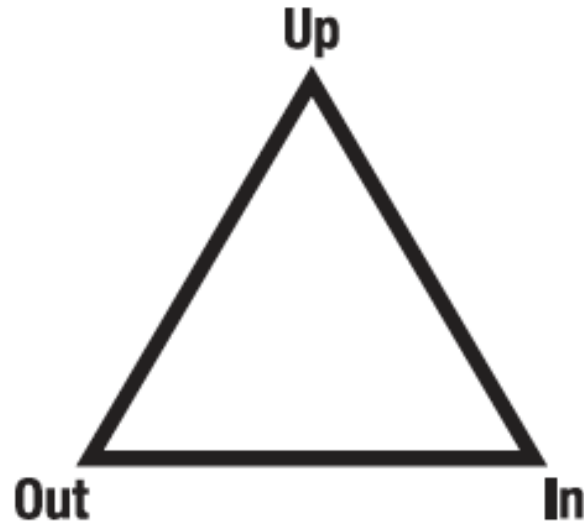
One of the best ways is through Sabbath, (which literally means, a rest): a must-have rhythm in a disciple's week. If someone in your group is having a particularly hard time believing it's possible for them to have a Sabbath or cut down unhealthy work hours, remind them of a few faith builders:

1. We serve God, not our boss.
2. If God has called us into a career or lifestyle, he won't contradict himself and provide no other option than workaholism and fatigue.
3. God always shows up when we need him. Read Daniel 1, and ask God what a "Daniel Fast" could look like for you to pursue honoring God when it comes to working from rest.
4. Discuss in depth why we are at capacity. We often forget that we are responsible for our lives and more in control of many of the factors that lead to unhealthy behaviors than we sometimes admit. Whether we lack intentionality, want to prove we can handle it all, struggle with people pleasing, are afraid to say no, worry someone will think we're lazy, worry God won't provide and we have to take care of ourselves, want to help to an unhealthy degree or simply take ourselves too seriously, identify the core patterns that lead to unbalanced lives, and pull it up from the root.



# 5

**UP/IN/OUT**



## HOW TO TEACH UP / IN / OUT

Jesus knew his purpose. He was focused and extremely intentional about how he spent time and who he spent it with. He touched many people in deep and lasting ways. His ministry was multi-dimensional and because of that, his influence spread. As we look at His life, we see Jesus focused on deepening his relationship with God through times of prayer. This was his UP. We also see him doing life with other believers. This was his IN. He also loved and cared for the world well. This was his OUT.

### UP

Jesus said in John 5:19, “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can only do what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.” Jesus knew the way to have a fruitful life was to only do what he heard God tell him. All the miracles, all of the effective teachings and all of the decisions He made were inspired. Jesus was fully human and it’s easy to forget he had no more access to God than we have. When we spend quality time with our Father, like Jesus, we have access to receiving from him.

And Jesus knew this relationship with the pinnacle of his ministry. We often see Jesus moving from a place of being with His Father to producing solid fruit. Luke captures this well in Luke 6:12. “In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.”

Jesus didn’t move until he got his marching orders from God. This UP relationship drove everything he did, and it should drive all we do. If we want to produce good fruit we must have a deep relationship with our Father and King.

This looks like both hearing His voice and sharing our hearts with him. Prayer, getting into the Bible, resting and abiding well are all parts of staying connected to the Father. We want to be regularly ridding our minds of competing voices so we can follow Jesus’ example and only do what the Father tells us.

The point of our UP relationship with God is to really know Him. We can’t know someone from a short conversation every now and then. We have to live with Him, which looks like inviting him into all areas of our life. We can’t compartmentalize our faith. God has to be present in all of it. As we share all

areas of our life with Him, we begin to see him work. Through His word and revelation from the Holy Spirit we learn His true character and calling on our lives. As we know Him, we begin to know what's in line with his heart and what isn't, and we begin to feel and believe how deeply He cares for us.

## **IN**

Luke 6:13–16 says, “When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.”

We were created to be in relationship with one another. Deep relationship with our Father, and deep relationship with other believers (the body).

In our culture, it's hard to believe we can have a relationship like the ones Jesus did. Relationships that are committed and gracious, that share everything and stay loyal through good and bad seasons are rare. It's this very type of relationship Jesus modeled with his disciples and those who followed him, and that through him we should expect to experience, too.

People desire to be known and belong. We live in a culture of spiritual and relational orphans who want a family. When we live the way Jesus modeled, it looks radically different than the rest of the world. It causes people to take notice (which is exactly what God intended).

In John 13:35, Jesus said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

When we love each other well, and our IN relationships are as important as our UP and OUT, people will naturally want to be a part of our lives. They'll see something nothing else in the world will offer them.

We want to grow balanced at our IN relationships to be an example to the world of the radical love of Jesus.

## **OUT**

Jesus was always aware of the crowds. He loved them and had compassion on them. In Luke 6, we see this progression of UP/IN/OUT. Jesus spends all night praying with God, then spends time with believers, and heads out to the world.

“He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirit were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.” — LUKE 6:17–19

Thank goodness Jesus never forgot why his Father sent him. He came to seek and save the lost. In each encounter with non-believers Jesus acted with compassion.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. — MATTHEW 9:36

When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick. — MATTHEW 14:14

Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him. — MATTHEW 20:34

Jesus didn't isolate himself with other believers, and if we're growing in his likeness, we can't either. In being available for them, He ascribed them tremendous value, something very few others had ever offered. Looking like Jesus means a pattern in our lives of spending time with the Father, the body and the masses. It means having a heart for the lost that wants to see the world collide with the Kingdom and meet their Father.

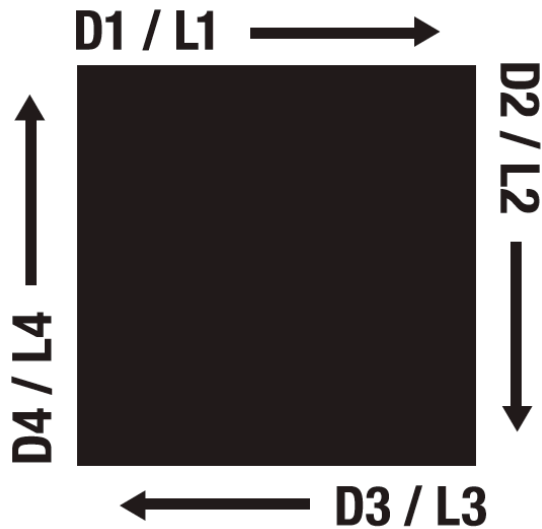
It's easy to get comfortable in a safe life of being around like-minded believers. It can feel risky to engage with people who believe differently than we do. But what bigger honor could we have than loving someone into our Father's Kingdom? To do that, we have to cultivate that same compassion for the world and prioritize time with those who don't believe in a way that moves them closer to God.

So when we go running, or to the grocery, or pass our neighbor in the yard—how can that become the Church interacting with a broken world instead of just another random person in another random place?

Remember, Jesus only did what the Father said. He didn't have to create anything on his own. He simply had to be aware of the work God was already doing, and come into partnership with him. It's the same for us. When we live with an ever-present awareness of the masses, we'll be aware of the work He's created. Then all we have to do is lean in to the work He's already begun.

# 6

## LEARNING & LEADING WELL



### HOW TO TEACH LEARNING & LEADING WELL

In our culture, leadership is often marked by position, commands and titles. The higher you climb on an organizational ladder, the more you're revered. And in the world, learning is often seen as a weakness. Being educated and having degrees is impressive, but the actual process of learning—the struggles, the sweat, the mistakes— isn't appealing.

Jesus blew all of that out of the water. Instead of climbing ladders and taking platforms, he got low and served. Instead of barking orders or showing off his skill, he walked amongst us patiently and humbly, sharing stories and taking the time to model a new way of living.

And leaders in the Bible? They were the ones who carried responsibility, not just influence. They cared for the people, shepherding and protecting, and ultimately taking the lowest position of a servant. It also required that the leader be a learner, as well—and this is the crux of this shape:

Good leaders are servants—and they adapt their teaching styles to match their people's needs.

So, instead of finding a leadership style and running with it (because it worked on some people), we adjust, like Jesus did. We embrace the shifting struggles and phases of a learner and stay fluid in our approach.

The Square helps us adapt and serve (See diagram above)

### D1 / L1

"The time has come," he said. "The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news." As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fisherman. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little further, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay, he called them and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. — MARK 1:15–20

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## **D1: Unconscious Incompetence**

(You don't know what you don't know.)

PROFILE: High enthusiasm, high confidence, low experience, low competence with feelings of confidence, blissfulness, cluelessness.

When we're new at something, or approaching a season of trying something new, we can experience a season (albeit sometimes very brief) of unconscious incompetence. This is when we just don't know what we don't know. This season is marked by blissful ignorance, energy and excitement. Sometimes it even involves naive yet grandiose plans for how the future will play out.

Think of the 14-year-old who dreams of driving a car. He's not aware of his inability to drive. He's only playing out all the amazing adventures he'll have once he gets in, forgetting the need to actually learn how to drive first.

## **L1: Directive**

(I do, you watch.)

PROFILE: High direction, high example, low consensus, low explanation.

While it might not seem intuitive or easy, someone in D1 needs a leader who can direct them. The path is unclear, and they need someone to show them the way. We see Jesus call the disciples in a directive style of leadership. He boldly asked them to trust and follow Him.

L1 is a directive leader. This is the time to cast a vision, give clear directives and a strong example to follow. This may be tough for your group to understand at first. Because directive leadership is so rarely done in love, they may even be tempted to question it. But directive doesn't mean arrogant or pushy. It simply means clear and confident.

The reason Jesus was effective at doing this was because it was done with a pure heart of love and care. There wasn't a hint of vanity or control in Him. He was clear and bold because He was confident in his mission and knew offering the invitation to others was the most loving thing he could do.

Strong L1 leaders believe in what they're doing, care sincerely for the people they lead and don't let the follower's reaction make them question the kingdom mission. They walk humbly and boldly giving the followers just enough of what they need to come along.

## **D2 / L2**

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give them to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." — LUKE 12:32–34

## **D2: Conscious Incompetence**

(You know what you don't know, and it sucks.)

PROFILE: Low enthusiasm, low confidence, low experience, low competence with feelings of being depressed, unmotivated, deeply discouraged, apathetic, sometimes even hopeless.

The blissful unawareness of not knowing what we don't know can fade quickly. Not long after taking a step towards realizing an unconscious incompetence can we find ourselves inevitably walking off a cliff. We didn't know how to turn the corner, and we find we've fallen into the pit that many compassionately and empathically call D2.

Pits suck. The growing frustration of realizing we don't know something, and we have no idea how to get it, can leave us feeling stuck and helpless. Our culture tends to be saturated in information for fixing things. Our first inclination in this place might be to read a book on how to fix the incompetence. Or we might try to power up and claw our way up the walls of dirt that naturally crumble, causing us to fall every time we manage a few inches closer to the top. We often hit a place of exhaustion from working at fixing the incompetence with no way out. The truth is, we can't get out alone. We need a leader who understands the pit to walk us out. D2 is painful, and the only way out is the time, vision and grace of a coach who can see us through to the other side.

Remember turning 16 and driving with your parents? Most us quickly realized (maybe because of their yelling) that you really don't know how to drive. If you want to progress with this skill, you sign up for Driver's Ed. It's not fun, but you need it. So you suck it up, and go.

## **L2: Coach**

(I do, you help.)

PROFILE: High direction, high discussion, high example, high accessibility.

When disciples turn the corner around the Square, the servant leader does as well. When we see people in D2, it's our responsibility to adapt and move into L2 ourselves. Even though it's the most pastoral stage of leadership, it doesn't shy away from reality. Strong pastors (and leaders) live in high invitation and high challenge. Jesus throws out some of his most compelling and uncomfortable teachings during stage D2 with his disciples.

Read through the whole chapter of Luke 12, and see how He throws them into the deep end. Jesus asks them to cast out demons and sell everything they own, all the while offering more time, vision and grace than they've experienced from anyone before. He promises a greater future, His presence and peace even in the midst of pain.

When we've exhausted our own resources of trying to get out of the pit in our own strength, the L2 coach drops a ladder down for us. It's not for immediate rescue. The rungs of this ladder are time, vision and grace. Instead of calling us up, the L2 leader climbs down to sit with us in the pit.

When we have energy for nothing else, they encourage us to exert just enough energy to flip up the dirt we're sitting in and dig a bit. Digging in time of struggle, suffering or helplessness is often where the gold is found. The gold of the pit will be different for all of us, but generally resembles humility, perspective, character, brokenness, insight, healing and more. They are treasures necessary for moving forward. Our goal isn't to rush through it to get back to a place of relief. When we try, we end up back in D1: cozy but clueless. Pits are worth embracing because we need the skills and insights buried in that dirt. Even when it's painful, we want to lean in to whatever God is doing, say "yes" even though it hurts, and develop the competencies we need to get to D3. The L2 leader is a coach who balances invitation and challenge, the way we see Jesus doing it all throughout chapter 12 in Luke.

A great L2 Coach knows the pit can be incredibly valuable and is a critical part of the growth process. They recognize the tendency to avoid pain as quickly as possible. Instead of helping the stuck friend immediately get out, they often encourage them to sit, listen and actually dig in to see what God might want to say, teach or develop in us. With God, they help us mine the gold from the bottom of the pit so we can move forward on strong footing.

## **D3 / L3**

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I have learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit - fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.”—  
JOHN 15:12–17

### **D3: Conscious Competence**

(You know that you know.)

PROFILE: Increasing enthusiasm, intermittent confidence, growing experience, growing competence, gaining skills with feelings of being humbled yet confident, teachable, eager, encouraged.

Turning the corner from D2 to D3 can take a long time and even be an unclear transition. The deeper the learning at hand, the more momentum it might take to turn the corner once and for all.

Think of the 16 year old who finally passes their driving test. They get in the car and they’re ready to go, but they still have to think about buckling their seat belt, placing their hands at three and nine (right?), but they now know how to drive a car.

As we’re mining gold in D2, we acquire skills. Whether emotional, tangible or spiritual, skill building is always a process. We’ll have great days when we seem to turn the corner. And we’ll have other days when we realize it was merely the start of being able to move all the way to solid ground where we can stand firmly in the new territory of conscious competence. We shouldn’t be discouraged if we find ourselves swinging back and forth between D2 and D3 for weeks or even months. Be diligent and faithful, remembering growth is a process we can’t rush.

But one glorious day, we’ll find ourselves in D3: the land of conscious competence. Here, we have skills. We’re aware of the past coaching we’ve received and able to operate sufficiently in our new skills with a growing confidence.

Because of our time in the D2 pit, it’s a spiritually surrendered place. We’ve found freedom knowing God is in charge, and we’re prepared to follow wherever he leads. Experiencing the new life on the other side of the pit often builds faith in God’s goodness. It might increase our desire for deeper maturity and bring confidence that prepares us to handle future pits. All of this because of the loving and gentle reminder of the gold God helped us dig up, because he saw the bigger picture all along.

### **L3: Consensus**

(You do, I help.)

PROFILE: Lower direction, higher consensus, high discussion, high accessibility.

When we see our disciples turning the corner, our leadership style adjusts accordingly. The L3 style of leadership is consensus. We saw it in Jesus when he told the disciples they weren’t slaves who didn’t understand their master’s business, but friends. Because of the intimacy of walking through a pit together, friendship becomes natural. The relationship feels different. He began including them more directly in the work He was doing and offering them tangible ways to practice it themselves. He began preparing them to do it solo. He grew them from common tradesmen to Spirit-filled disciples who could cast out demons, preach the Gospel and literally change the world.

## **D4 / L4**

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. Surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.” — MATTHEW 28:18

### **D4: Unconscious Competence**

(You forget that you know—because it’s that natural.)

PROFILE: High enthusiasm, high confidence, high experience, high competence with feelings of being peaceful, capable, wise, paternal/ maternal.

Strong time spent in D3 transforms enthusiasm and competence into deep-rooted skills and character. Whether the learning at hand was skill-oriented, spiritual or emotional, our identity is more deeply rooted in God and our ability to look and act like Jesus is refined in a new way. The disciple now becomes a leader in the topic at hand, ready to train others as they’ve been trained.

This is the finish line, and a really exciting place to be for both the leader and the disciple, and it’s worth celebrating. Unconscious competence means they’re functioning naturally, no longer depending on instruction or operating meekly in tentative confidence. It doesn’t mean they won’t ever mess up, but they’ve proven themselves with capabilities that now feel so natural, they almost don’t know what they know.

This is like a 50-year-old getting in a car. There’s little necessity to think about hand position, blinkers or the seat belt. Those things happen with little to no thought.

### **L4: Delegative**

(You do, I watch—and cheer.)

PROFILE: Low direction, high consensus, low example, high explanation.

This is the stage we see Jesus completing his work. He moved from “Come, follow me” to the “go and do” of the Great Commission. Friendships have been formed, intimacy has grown, and the leader starts transitioning the disciple to this mentality of passing his skills on to others. The frequency of interactions and type of time spent together begins to change. The relationship evolves to a greater degree of bonding, but often a much different day-to-day experience because the disciple is no longer dependent on their leader (which is a good thing!). They get to send them off to start a new learning process of leading others through the Square themselves, and their leader gets to sit back, watch and cheer.

### **NOTE TO PARENTS:**

Jesus Modeled Perfecting Parenting

Jesus modeled a tangible example of God’s perfect parenting in how he led. His life embodies the important elements of training our kids in a holistically loving and caring way. It can become the blueprint for training our children to look like Jesus in character and competence (not to mention it can be super helpful in teaching them to ride a bike).

Jesus’ parenting led the disciples to feel cared for, loved and secure. Jesus ascribed them tremendous value and worth in how he led them. This gave them the freedom to try new things even if they came back with what looked like failure. They knew they weren’t going to be abandoned but encouraged and shepherded. They might have even felt secure in trying new things because they knew it would be



modeled for them first, before they were released to try on their own. They could grow confident and strong, knowing their teacher was always for them.

Building our families by imitating Jesus in our parenting, not only teaches them to look like him, but also gives them an easily reproducible foundation upon which to share their faith.

What unexpected goodness might our family experience if Jesus' leadership was a guiding parenting strategy in our home?



## HOW TO TEACH GENEROSITY

OK, disciples. You've learned invitation and challenge, how to work from rest, how to hear from God. You're growing in all things related to reaching seekers and maturing believers. Along the way, we've assigned meaning to different shapes to use as memory tools. But there's one other shape you're already very familiar with. One that we want to redefine entirely.

We can't talk about growing as disciples without talking about how Jesus viewed money, and taking on that view for ourselves. Somehow, that one symbol has the power to become simultaneously both our biggest source of comfort and greatest fear. Our favorite treasure and our most private and (sometimes even unrealized) idol. How we look at our money has the power to free us in life-changing ways or hold us in bondage even when all the other disciple-y characteristics seem to be firing on all cylinders. It can empower us to change the world in tangible, everyday ways or literally get buried and aggressively wasted. It's one of the enemy's favorite ways to deceive us and keep us from looking like Jesus.

If we're disciples, it shows everywhere. We can't say we follow Jesus without our finances reflecting it. That doesn't just mean that we sometimes give to a church. We're talking about handling all of "our" money in a way that makes it really clear what we believe.

### **We're Rich.**

The simple truth is—we are crazy stinking rich. The much more difficult question is: Why? Did we earn it? Do we deserve it? Why did we get this? Why us, and not millions of other people on the earth?

We have our own personalized transportation systems that take us anywhere we want to go anytime. We have homes that shelter us from any weather, hold all of our stuff, create opportunities for pleasure, fun and hospitality. We have so much food we actually throw it away sometimes. So, seriously, it begs the question: Why us?

Discipleship is sometimes thought of as the process of becoming who Jesus would be if he were us. When we think about money and the answers to those questions, what would Jesus do with money if he were us?

### **We Own Nothing.**

(It's all God's. Nothing is ours.)

The way we answer those questions uncovers an often deeply unspoken part of our faith. If we believe we earned it, we naturally handle it however we want to handle it. If we believe we deserve it, it would only make sense to channel it towards ourselves or what pleases us. If we believe something different, our response changes entirely. It becomes the response of a true disciple.

Generosity isn't something that comes only through people who claim to follow Jesus. Lots of people are generous in their own ways. The difference is: secular people "give back" to a world that has been good enough to them that they can afford to offer a return. Believers surrender to God what they know was actually his all along.

In 1 Chronicles 29:11-17, we see David talking about giving as a matter of integrity. He realizes we don't actually own anything. God temporarily entrusted us with resources, but sometimes we get confused and think it's ours. So we live like the failure to be generous, at its worst, is stinginess.

But through David we see it's actually dishonesty. It wasn't ours to begin with. It all belongs to God. It's like if a stock broker took your money and ignored your expressed instructions on how to handle it. You wouldn't accuse him of being stingy. He'd be dishonest, because it isn't his to control.

It's hard to look at it that way, because of how deeply ingrained an idol money has become. Whether we're Sandy Saver or Scotty-Spend-A-Lot, how we handle our money has everything to do with what we believe about God. (Everything?!?) In this shape, we want to learn how to identify the problem (idols) and provide the solution (surrender).

### **We Overcome Idols with Surrender**

1 Timothy 6:10 says: For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with all kinds of griefs.

Loving money raises its status to that of an idol—something that is trusted in, obsessed over and even worshipped— something that replaces God.

Idolatry has long been a temptation for humans. It separates us from God. Learning to deal with our money in a way that resembles how Jesus would free us financially. It will also build in us discipleship skills that can overcome a multitude of other spiritual obstacles. We'll be training specifically in identifying idols with our money and practicing surrender to defeat it.

Matthew 6:21 says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

We want to show God our hearts are with him.

So, here's the plan:

Identify idols. (I)

Overcome with surrender. (S)

The shape is intentionally simple as a way to train ourselves to identify potential idols and opportunities to surrender every time we see it.

When we look at money this way, it is going to raise lots of questions that are different for each of us. What does that mean for my spending? My saving? My debt? My giving? The cost of living I've established? The livelihood I've chosen? The decisions I make about luxuries I can afford?

Thankfully, there are two questions we're really familiar with that help us work through those. Take our finances around the learning circle to figure out: What is God saying? What should I do about it?

### **Money Verses**

#### **Debt**

Proverbs 22:7  
Romans 13:8-9  
Proverbs 6:1-11  
Matthew 11:28-30  
Proverbs 19:17

#### **Materialism**

Ecclesiastes 5:8-17  
Luke 12:13-21  
Ecclesiastes 2:1-11  
Galatians 5:1  
Luke 3:10-14

#### **Trust**

Malachi 3:10 (trust me)  
Lamentations 3:17-23  
Matthew 6:25-34  
Matthew 9:11-14  
2 Corinthians 9:6-8

#### **Honesty**

1 Timothy 6:10  
1 Chronicles 29:11-17  
John 13:34-35  
Matthew 6:19-24  
Acts 5:1-11

#### **Spending**

Matthew 25:14-40  
Mark 12:41-44  
Mark 14:3-9  
Luke 19:11-26  
Proverbs 11:25

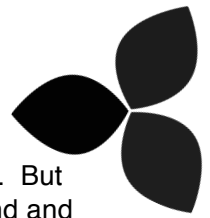
#### **Security**

Luke 12:31  
Proverbs 3:9-10  
Proverbs 13:11  
Isaiah 55:1-3  
Isaiah 40:31

#### **Generosity**

2 Corinthians 9:6-15  
Acts 2:42-47  
Acts 4:32-35  
Deuteronomy 15:10-11  
Matthew 10:86

## 5 Spiritual Disciplines



Sometimes we think of discipline as a negative thing, as a consequence for something done wrong. But Spiritual Discipline allows us to work toward the completion of something good. It's training the mind and body to be better equipped to do the work that God wants you to do. It's not a matter of trying harder to be a better follower of Christ, it's training to. Discipline is a key part of any discipleship conversation.

Jesus modeled a consistent pattern of spiritual discipline during his earthly ministry—and if Jesus, who is God, chose to be disciplined, then how much more should we do the same? There are many spiritual disciplines, but here is a list of five that can have an incredible impact on the life of a believer.

### Discipline 1: Prayer

Prayer is talking to and listening to God about your relationship with Him and the concerns of you and others. Find time to pray to God without the distraction of people or things. Combine your prayer time with meditation on the Scriptures in order to focus on Christ.

### Discipline 2: Scripture Reading

Spend time reading the Scriptures and meditating on its meaning and importance to our lives. We are nourished by the Word because it is our source of spiritual strength. Choose a time and a place to feed from the Word of God regularly.

### Discipline 3: Worship

Worship is a Christian imperative if we are aiming to be like Christ. It's what Christ says the Father is seeking in John 4. When we worship the Lord, we engage him with intention and reverence. When we worship the Lord, we focus our lives on the Supreme Being. In an age ripe with idolatry and a compulsive need to place people on the altar of our hearts, where only Christ belongs, worship must be a daily part of our lives.

When Jesus resists Satan's offer to bow down and worship him, what he shows us is the heart of a true worshipper. Worship is more than affection; it is the acknowledgment of God's invaluable worth and a commitment to express that worth by placing him above all else.

### Discipline 4: Fasting

Prior to his public ministry Jesus spent forty days fasting. If you grew up like me, you love food! Food is indeed a gift from God. He provided it for our replenishment, but not our diminishment. And whenever food messes up our faith, we have a problem. Whenever the obsession to satisfy our stomachs becomes greater than our need to satisfy our Savior, then God leaves it to us to fast.

Tony Evans describes fasting as "the deliberate abstinence from some form of physical gratification...to achieve a greater spiritual goal." This definition clarifies the purpose of the fast: to obtain a spiritual goal. This slight nuance is what distinguishes the discipline of fasting from mere abstinence. There are a number of ways to fast and various types of fasts. For example, it is possible to fast from pleasures such as social media, the Internet, sex, or any activity that brings gratification and satisfaction. However, fasting from food is a common type of fast and the type of fast that Jesus practiced.

### Discipline 5: Service / Mission

If we are to live like Christ, then mission cannot be seen as an optional exercise. Service is a regular practice. It is not only something Christians do to give back to society; it is also the heartbeat and pulse of our call to discipleship.

There is no way we can accurately represent Jesus without emulating his commitment to serve others. Our willingness to serve is an indication that we are maturing in spiritual virtues. It's easy to read a book on humility; it is much more difficult to actually live with humility. Service is a tool that God uses to teach us virtues that can't be learned from textbooks but only in the school of experience.