



DISCIPLESCHURCH

Membership Class

Class Session 3

Membership Priorities - Part 2

Glorifying God Through Lives Transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ

CLASS SESSION 3: Membership Priorities - Part 2

I. Intro and Recap from Last Session

As Christians, we are members of God's household called to function, participate, and minister in a particular local church within the body of Christ. A healthy body requires that each member do its part well. A healthy church requires the same: members who are sacrificially committed and well-equipped to grow and do the works of service that God has prepared in advance for them to do. Being a member of the local church is really about being a committed and accountable part of a family. The elders of that local church are called to assist members in growth, to love and lead, provide counsel and aid, pray for, teach, and guide those under their care.

TESTIMONY (Recap)

- To share the story of God's grace in your life with others, including those who do not know Jesus
- To regularly share testimony with Disciples Church about how God is working in your life
- To follow the command and example of Jesus by participating in the ordinances prescribed to His Church:
 - by being baptized after conversion and
 - by regularly and accountably remembering and celebrating the person and work of Christ through the Lord's Supper

WORSHIP (Recap)

- To actively seek to worship God with your entire life
- To make it a top priority to regularly attend and participate in weekly worship services at Disciples Church
- To commit to daily enjoying unity with and submitting to Jesus through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and the practice of spiritual disciplines
- To steward the resources God has given you, including your time, talents, and treasure. This includes regular financial giving, service, and participation in this church that is sacrificial, cheerful, consistent, and voluntary.

II. The Five Priorities of Covenant Membership

THE FIVE PRIORITIES OF DISCIPLESCHURCH COVENANT MEMBERSHIP

Testimony | Worship | Service | Accountability | Discipleship

SERVICE

WHAT IS SERVICE?

Service is using your time, effort, heart, and God-given gifts to sacrificially minister to others in love.

- A pillar of our vision is “love others.”

Love Others: Meeting people’s needs in order to build authentic relationships so that the gospel can be increasingly made known.

- Service is sacrificial love in action.

John 15:13 “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”

- We are only able to love because of God at work in us.

1 John 4:7-9 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.

1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

1. UNDERSTAND YOUR GIFTS AND PURSUE BIBLICAL GROWTH IN THEM

Romans 12:3-6 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them ...

Work with leaders over time to help identify your giftedness in ministry.

2. SERVE AND ENCOURAGE THE FAITH OF OTHERS IN THIS CHURCH WITH THE BIBLICAL USE OF YOUR GIFTS

John 13:34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

Have a special reverence and love for fellow believers.

Begin serving in areas where the church has real need at this time.
See handout for current Service Opportunities at Disciples Church.

3. SERVE THOSE OUTSIDE OF THIS CHURCH WITH THE BIBLICAL USE OF YOUR GIFTS

Luke 6:31-36 “And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”

A. Testimony- Taking time to share your testimony and the good news of Jesus Christ with those God supernaturally puts in your path each day.

B. Relationships- Intentionally cultivating relationships with the non-believing people God has supernaturally put in your life that you interact with regularly (family, neighbors, friends, co-workers).

C. Ministry- Using your God-given talents and resources to serve/love others with the gospel of Jesus Christ (foster and/or adopt or help those who do, sew quilts and pillow cases, volunteer at the Pregnancy Center, etc.).

D. Projects- Participating in special projects or fundraisers aimed at loving others with gospel intentionality.

ACCOUNTABILITY

WHAT IS ACCOUNTABILITY?

We are all accountable first and ultimately to God.

Romans 14:12 ... each of us will give an account of himself to God.

We are also accountable to other believers.

1 Thessalonians 5:11-14 ... encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Proverbs 15:22 Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.

Accountability to one another is inviting others into your life in such a way that they know you and your struggles to the point they can walk with you and talk honestly with you as you seek to press into Christ and honor Him with your life. It is loving to correct someone who professes to be a Christian when he/she is out of step of core sound doctrine or practicing other sin. If he/she does not repent after biblical efforts are made, then God's instruction is disfellowship until he/she does. All Christians are to joyfully submit to biblically-based accountability.

1. SUBMIT TO THE AUTHORITIES GOD HAS PLACED IN YOUR LIFE

A. Submit to the ultimate authority of the Bible

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

Matthew 4:4 But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

John 14:23-24 Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.”

B. Submit to the elders and other leadership of Disciples Church

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

- For more information, please see the document, “What is Biblical Eldership?”

2. BE ACCOUNTABLE TO ONE ANOTHER

Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom ...

A. Confess and repent when sin is evident

James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another ...

B. Commitment to biblical peacemaking

Please see the document “Peacemaker’s Pledge”

DISCIPLESHIP

DISCIPLESHIP OVERVIEW AND VISION

The New Testament model of Christian discipleship is much different than what many have done in recent years and this drifting away from the New Testament model of Christian discipleship has had serious negative effects throughout churches in our day. Many local churches are filled with people who lack true depth in understanding sound doctrine and/or lack high levels of wisdom/maturity because they have not been fully discipled.

But at Disciples Church, we seek to follow the model that Christ established, which is the same model we see the Apostle Paul (and others) emulate: New Testament Christian discipleship. God has a beautiful design in this for His glory and the good of His people.

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Fundamentally, all believers in Christ are disciples. Being a disciple of Christ begins with new life in Christ.

Being *in Christ* (a part of Christ's body, being *one of His disciples*) means that we are not alone. We were saved into a community, into a family. God's design in this is very intentional. God's reasons are many, but the one most relevant to our consideration of discipleship is that God does not permit disciples to be alone—to be autonomous. By God's design, we are to walk with other Christians. Life in Christ and biblical discipleship doesn't happen alone. Discipleship must involve other Christians. Discipleship includes a joyful submission to more mature Christians who have the important role of leading you in the word of God and life unto Christlikeness.

Three main attributes that should be evident in a disciple of Jesus:

1. A disciple is a *joyful follower*.

Christian discipleship is following more mature believers, using God's word, in order to be growing in biblical wisdom and sanctification (conforming to Christ in heart, mind, and deed while sinning less and repenting quicker when we do sin).

Mark 2:14 And as he [Jesus] passed by, he saw Levi ... and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

1 Corinthians 11:1 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

Being more like Christ is the goal.

Jesus said in Matthew 28, "make disciples ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." All of life is affected and changed by the word. God intends all of who we are to be conformed to Christ, in accordance with the whole of Scripture. Therefore, there is nothing "off-limits" (so to speak) in discipleship. If the Bible explicitly or implicitly speaks to something, it should be addressed and shaped in discipleship.

2. A disciple is a *diligent learner*.

Christian discipleship is growing in a right understanding of God and His word—truth. By God's design, disciples are to love biblical truth. They love His word, and they love sound doctrine.

2 Peter 3:18 ... grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

John 8:31-32 So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Disciples are ever increasing in understanding sound doctrine. There must be a longing to know God rightly.

Jeremiah 9:24 "... let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me ..."

3. A disciple is an *intentional reproducer*.

Christian discipleship always has a goal of moving beyond one's self when rightly trained to pour into others.

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

The results of discipleship include duplication—disciples are being prepared/trained to make disciples themselves. But you can't be a disciple-maker until you've been discipled, and you can't be a faithful disciple if you're not intentional and invested.

Discipleship equips believers to serve the church we are a part of and, when readied, more directly pour into others.

Sometimes (as is our vision in this church), it is appropriate to send disciples out to plant other partner churches or participate in international missions/disciple-making. This would be a decision made in unity when it applies. But for the rest/majority, the expectation is that disciples that are made in our church plan to be a part of and minister in our church long-term.

THE BIBLICAL MODEL

To get a clear view of how Jesus and His disciples modeled this for us, consider the following process and Scripture for discipleship:

1. Selection

Matthew 4:18-20 While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Discipleship is for everyday people who are hungry, willing to commit, willing to be led, and willing to learn! Selection and coordination of disciples happens by the leader(s).

2. Association

Acts 4:13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Discipleship is about spending time together! The need for intentional time together can be clearly seen in Scripture.

3. Commitment

Matthew 8:18-22 Now when Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to go over to the other side. And a scribe came up and said to him, "Teacher, I will follow

you wherever you go.” And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” Another of the disciples said to him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” And Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.”

Following Jesus requires sacrifice, and life together in discipleship gets hard—just like in a biological family. Therefore, disciples must be committed to enduring together according to Scripture.

4. Impartation

Matthew 7:24 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

2 Timothy 2:2 ... what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

Impartation in Christian discipleship is to produce growth in a right understanding of God and His truths/word, and growth in biblical wisdom and sanctification.

5. Demonstration

Philippians 4:9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Jesus and His Apostles modeled for believers how we should live. It was more than hearing good teachings; it was seeing the truth come alive.

6. Supervision

Matthew 10:24 “A disciple is not above his teacher ...”

1 Thessalonians 5:14 And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

Gospel reorientation is the joy of walking together in discipleship, being led by a mature Christian.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

In its most ultimate sense, this verse is about honoring and submitting to pastors/elders, but the principle applies to all believers who are being led by or disciplined by others.

7. Reproduction

Acts 2:42, 47 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers ... And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Acts 6:4, 7 "... we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ... And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

There we see reproduction that happened when the disciples were faithful to biblical ministry, not as a promise of results, but as a principle: disciples multiplied.

"The number of the disciples multiplied." This is our commission from our Lord Jesus:

Matthew 28:20 "[Make disciples] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you ..."

HOW DOES DISCIPLESHIP HAPPEN AT OUR CHURCH?

At Disciples Church, discipleship generally happens in four ways or layers.

Christian discipleship is a process and it is not exactly cookie-cutter; it does not look the exact same for everyone all the time.

The first layer is a critical foundation in discipleship:

1. Sunday Worship

Sunday worship is a primary catalyst and undergirding in discipleship.

Sunday worship is the most primary way that we gather as the body of Christ to be equipped by our shepherds in the teaching of God's word, in fellowship, in celebrating the Lord's Supper, and baptism.

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Ephesians 4:11-12 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

In regards to discipleship, it is important that you see that to some degree, every committed person who attends Sunday worship faithfully is being discipled. They are being taught, trained, and reoriented to Christ to become more like Christ, to fight sin, and to worship God with all their lives. Sunday worship alone lacks some of the deeper life-on-life that God has called us all to, but nonetheless, growth does happen.

However, the best growth and the best investment in discipleship needs deeper COMMUNITY. This is why we stress "growing within community." The next three layers of discipleship are the three ways this fuller community discipleship happens here at Disciples Church.

2. MidWeek Gathering

The focus of MidWeek is to abide in Christ and His word corporately through sound teaching and organized community.

MidWeek groups is a next step for people to be known, loved, challenged, and led.

The MidWeek evening starts with light refreshments and a time of fellowship and then moves into a teaching time of clear and helpful instruction from God's word. Next, people break into small groups, and group leaders facilitate the further study of God's word and discussion around the table.

Adults:

Anyone committed to Disciples Church can come participate and jump in at any time. The opening fellowship time and the lesson portion are open to all. The small group (table group) time is open to those who are committed and regular participants in Disciples' Sunday morning service/gathering. Table groups consist of adults of all ages, thereby giving us a perfect opportunity to see our generations come together to abide in Christ. The adult groups are separated by gender. Men meet with men and women with women. We have found that deeper, authentic discussion and growth happens in these settings. People/groups often gather in co-ed environments for various other events and/or service projects. Our group leaders have been trained and discipled over the years, and we encourage our MidWeek people to confidently let them lead you in the word and life.

High School:

High school students participate in the same large group study as the adults and then separate to their own age-appropriate groups after the initial teaching segment. These groups are often separated by gender. We have devoted and equipped group leaders who will be hosting these student groups.

Middle School:

Middle school students generally have their own separate space in which to gather. In their unique phase of life, we have found that they are too old for kids club and too young for the fullness of the adult gathering. Our middle school team of volunteers is committed to engaging our middle school students with an evening geared toward them that includes fellowship, relationship building, and growing in God's word, commonly through lessons tailored for them in the same content the adults are studying, so there is consistency in the families.

Children:

Kids ages birth through 5th grade gather for "Kids Club" and "FOUNDATIONS." They enjoy a fun time of fellowship, bible lessons, singing, and game or craft activities.

3. Further Growth Discipleship

The next layer of discipleship at Disciples Church moves into increased focus and personal interaction and application.

In seeking even more biblical knowledge and sanctification/maturity, increased study and accountability typically happens with a smaller group that is interested in devoting additional time. This is a walking together in the context of meeting with a leader personally or as a small group outside of Midweek.

While fellowship is increased here, these are not simply social times together; rather, there is an intentional purpose to seek Christian growth and be even more accountable to other mature Christians in this increased discipleship. This layer of discipleship includes Bible study using various resources.

This is for those interested and able to go deeper—committing some additional time to study and growing with a leader. This is likely an additional weekly time together to study a book or topic in which the person or smaller group needs to be growing. This is more than the MidWeek discussion layer—you have more time to really dig in and focus more carefully on growth.

These Further Growth Discipleships don't go on forever. They serve a purpose for a season and then finish. They may be an eight-week study through one book, several months to cover a few books and topics, or even a few years—but the particular commitment of a disciple to a leader (disciple-maker) does not continue forever *in this way*.

Further Growth Discipleship happens in many different ways at the church. The goal is not for these discipleship situations to all look exactly the same, but rather, for discipleship to be intentional in that a leader is looking to help those under their teaching and care grow in specific ways. There is real variety in how this happens throughout the church.

The duration of each Further Growth Discipleship depends primarily on two things, 1) the disciple-maker's ability and vision for it, and 2) the disciple's willingness to follow the lead of the disciple-maker.

Further Growth Discipleship aims to produce growth in such a way that the goal of moving beyond one's self is increasingly actualized over time, so that one becomes readied to pour into others in disciple-making to the degree they have been disciplined themselves.

4. Leadership Discipleship

The fullest layer of discipleship seeks to ready individuals for certain roles of leadership in God's church—roles such as: group leading, formal teaching, disciple-making, church planting, missionary work, etcetera.

In Leadership Discipleship, the goal is to emulate the New Testament model of discipleship as much as possible. Think about the kind of relationship Jesus had with the 12 disciples or that Paul had with his ministry training disciples.

The Leadership Discipleship process includes committing to the highest level of authenticity, dedication, study, and accountability. This is for those who have real availability, commitment, and show important prerequisite qualities. The layer/option of discipleship is not for everyone, but we're committed to doing it with those who are ready for it and longing it. No one is required to be in Leadership Discipleship.

This discipleship is designed to have the most impact on biblical understanding and sanctification/maturity. Leadership Discipleship consists of the one longing to be discipled *fully* and *faithfully* submitting themselves to the life-coaching and mentorship of the disciple-maker. Leadership Discipleship is where we see our greatest growth, but it requires the greatest investment of time, study, and submission.

There is increased/focused interaction between the disciple and the disciple-maker, an increased amount of time spent in study, and an increased amount of accountability.

Leadership Discipleship prepares a believer for and produces growth in such a way that the goal of moving beyond one's self is certainly actualized over time, whereby a discipled person is readied to more directly pour into others in disciple-making in further layers and is diligent to do so when the elders commission them to. This type of discipleship usually takes several years to fully run its course.

And then, those discipled in this way (like in the other ways) are still to be in discipleship in the way that they are continually accountable to mature believers and growing. How the process looks does change but being discipled in the Lord doesn't stop in this life.

Service, accountability, and discipleship—all of these are critical to the testimony and operation of Christ's Church. Doing these things in a biblical way means we honor God and fulfill the mission He has set for us.