

## Session 1 - Invitation to Discipleship - Session Outline for Leaders

Time?	What? (things in <b>green</b> are found in the Session 1 material)	Who?
Before Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become familiar with this session's material</li> <li>• Facilitator prepares to share their own discipleship journey</li> <li>• Share <b>Session 1 Handout</b> and/or <b>Session 1 Video</b> with participants in advance</li> <li>• Have copies of <b>Discipleship Enablers: Introduction</b> to give to group</li> <li>• Come ready with <b>Tool/Practice Pictures of Discipleship Photo – either paper copy or PowerPoint slide</b></li> <li>• <b>Activity (Session 1 material, p. 9)</b> if you wish to use it</li> </ul>	
10 mins	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank everyone for coming</li> <li>• <b>Opening Prayer</b> (<i>see Session 1 material, p.1 – or as you see fit</i>)</li> <li>• Introduce yourself briefly</li> <li>• Participants introduce themselves – inc BRIEFLY why they're here.</li> <li>• Give a VERY brief overview of the purpose of Discipleship Enablers. A 12 month journey of...               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Helping a group of people have an experience of growing as disciples</li> <li>- Introducing some tools, practices and questions which can help with them</li> <li>- Taking this experience back into our own context and using it to help others grow too.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Give out <b>Introduction to Discipleship Enablers handout</b>, which will give more detail on the shape of the journey.</li> </ul>	
25 mins	<p><b>Tool/Practice for the Session</b> <b>(split into 2 groups if more than 12)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We're going to dive straight in with something practical. Introduce <b>photo activity</b> with a question: Which of these pictures most represents your understanding of Christian discipleship? Why?</li> <li>2. Give participants 2-3 minutes to choose a picture. Then get them to share their responses.</li> <li>3. Explain how each picture links to a biblical image of discipleship (look at the related texts if time).</li> <li>4. Discuss:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there other important biblical images of the Christian life which are not represented here?</li> <li>• What are the advantages and challenges of there being multiple biblical pictures of the Christian life?</li> <li>• What would be lost if we only focused on one of these images?</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Share <b>Discipleship Story</b> - about how/why the resource was created. Or use own story about starting discipleship conversations.</li> <li>6. Discuss: how could a picture-based activity like this be useful in encouraging discipleship conversations in your own context?</li> </ol>	

5-10 mins	<p><b>Leader Summarises Core Session Content – part 1 - Discipleship</b></p> <p><b>Discipleship: A Tricky Word?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In this journey we're often going to use the word 'discipleship' to describe the Christian life.</li> <li>• So it's worth pausing at the beginning to reflect on the language we use. 'Discipleship' - a tricky/unfamiliar word for many people – even in church.</li> <li>• Sometimes we might need to start with other language if the word 'discipleship' is an obstacle. But talking about 'discipleship' can also be a gift, reminding us of the distinctive life we're called to.</li> </ul> <p><b>Jesus and Discipleship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jesus' ministry was unique, but many ancient teachers had 'disciples' who followed them and tried to live out their teachings.</li> <li>• The New Testament uses 'disciple' 268 times – most common word for people following and learning from Jesus.</li> <li>• Jesus calls disciples at start of ministry (Mk1.16-20)</li> <li>• We show ourselves to be his disciples as we 'bear much fruit' (Jn 15.8)</li> <li>• At Ascension, Jesus calls his followers to 'go and make disciples... baptising them... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded' (Matt 28.19)</li> <li>• His followers knew they were his disciples.. So did onlookers. We can be clear we are disciples of Jesus too.</li> </ul> <p><b>What is a 'disciple'?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'At root, a Christian disciple is someone who puts their trust in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and daily chooses to be a learner from, follower of, apprentice to, Jesus Christ'.</li> <li>• Greek word for disciple = 'mathetes' (learner/follower/student).</li> <li>• 'We are people who spend our lives apprenticed to our Master, Jesus Christ... a learner, but not in the academic setting of a school room, but rather at the work site of a craftsman' (Eugene Peterson).</li> <li>• Discipleship as: 'a continuous and growing willing surrender to God in Christ as the centre of my life, above anyone else, every day, in everything' (Guy Donegan-Cross).</li> <li>• Over the course of this journey we will look at different aspects/dimensions of this in more detail, to build up a rounded and full picture of Christian discipleship, with tools and practices to help us with different aspects of it.</li> </ul>	Who?
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10 mins	<p><b>Discussion Questions: (split into groups of 4-6)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What language do <u>you</u> use to describe being, doing and growing as a Christian? What language does <u>your church</u> use?</li> <li>• Do you find the language of 'discipleship' helpful? Why (not)?</li> <li>• What do you think of the idea of being an 'apprentice' to Jesus?</li> <li>• How do you feel about surrender to God being the heart of discipleship? How might we listen to God every day?</li> </ul>	
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How did Jesus go about calling people to discipleship? How did they respond? What do we learn from this for our own discipleship? What do we learn from Jesus about inviting others too?

1. **Scattering the seed widely** (like the Parable of the Sower). How is my life 'good soil'? How do I 'scatter widely'?
2. Jesus calls us to **'seek first the Kingdom of God' and 'make disciples'**. Discipleship is the priority; growing church structure/activity won't in itself grow disciples.
3. Jesus **welcomes anyone**, regardless of social distinction or reputation. Do we feel welcome? How can we give this radical welcome to others?
4. Jesus preaches: 'repent, for the Kingdom of heaven has come near'. As discipleship enablers, we **take the plank out of our own eye first!**
5. Jesus **offers a rich, attractive vision of the Kingdom** of God. What is my vision of the Kingdom? How might I share this with others?
6. Jesus is **realistic about the costs of discipleship** - but also the greater costs of 'non-discipleship'. How can I also be realistic with others?
7. Jesus was **intentional/planful** about his own mission. How can I be planful about my own discipleship - and about enabling discipleship?
8. Jesus was also **highly interruptible**. How can I put people before process, and give headspace and diary space to God and others?
9. Jesus **goes to the lost and hungry** in particular. How am I bringing my hunger/lostness to God? How is my heart for the last, least and lost?
10. Jesus invites people into **conversation**, often using **questions**. What do I want God to do for me? What 'aches' do you hear from others?
11. Jesus **invites people to use their gifts/skills** for the Kingdom. What are my gifts? How do I help others discern theirs?
12. Jesus gathered a band of close followers. Renewal has often started with **small, mutually accountable groups committed to prayer, discipleship and mission**. How could this happen in my church?
13. Jesus teaches his disciples to look for the **'people of peace'**. Am I 'of peace' to God and others? Who are the people of peace local to me?
14. Jesus affirms people who respond to him **expectantly, gladly or with perseverance**. What does this mean for me/my walk with others?
15. Jesus **doesn't force anyone to follow him**. We don't make discipleship a heavy burden on people's backs.

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10 mins **Discussion Questions:** (split into groups of 4-6 – choose a few of these, or follow group members' interest in any of the points above)

- It's been suggested that our main calling is to **become and to make disciples, rather than to grow the church**. How far do you agree?
  - Jesus **meets people where they are hungry/in need**. What 'aches' or needs (spiritual, mental, physical) do you see in your context?
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- The examples given here all show people paying attention to God and responding. This is central to discipleship, and to this journey together. **What helps you pay attention to God - and respond?**
  - Jesus called a small group of close followers to learn, grow and participate in his ministry together. **What's your experience of small discipleship groups in which members are accountable to each other?** Who could we gather with, to do this?
  - In your context, who seems warm towards God- i.e, **who are the people of peace?** What can help us walk with those people?
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15 mins **Sharing your Discipleship Story**

**Who?**

Explain:

- Discipleship is as much caught as taught, as we share life together.
- Sharing our stories is a crucial part of this. As leader, you're sharing a little of your own (imperfect) experience of being a disciple.
- By sharing our own story honestly and openly, we can encourage others to share their own stories too.

Share your story (10 mins)

Invite people to either offer encouraging reflections on it, or things they notice or have learned (this isn't a place for criticism and challenge).

Explain: Group members will have c. 15 minutes to share their own discipleship journey on the retreat day. They only need share what they wish to. They can bring photos, objects or their **Spiritual Journey Map tool/practice** (which will be shared in advance) if helpful. Stories can include...

- Moments when you have surrendered to God.
  - Times when you have paid attention to God and responded.
  - How God has used important life events to grow you.
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5 mins Take any **questions** group members have about Discipleship Enablers.

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5 mins **Next steps:**

- Thank you for taking part
- Feel free to use session material with your own group – but please don't share more widely at present.
- Let us know privately whether you want to continue, by [date]
- Close in prayer

This guide is based on a roughly 90 minute session – if you have two hours you can take longer over some of the activities.