

## Discipleship Groups

### Why Discipleship Groups

How we got to Discipleship groups has a bit of a backstory that is worth explaining (aka “The Why”).

At New Life we dream of equipping for life. We seek to equip those who spend just a few years with us for a lifetime of following Jesus. We think someone is equipped for a lifetime of following Jesus if they have formed lifestyles of Worship, Community, and Mission. Discipleship groups (D groups) are one of the key ways we hope to see the Holy Spirit form these lifestyles in God's people.

Lifestyles are formed by consistent habits that are formed by ongoing actions. So we designed a tool to help disciples engage in this process! We call it the Discipleship Pathway.

#### *Discipleship Pathway*

The Discipleship Pathway (D Path) is a tool. There are plenty of ways to go about discipleship and seeing these lifestyles formed in people's lives. In fact, we would hope that Home Groups and Sunday service, and any fellowship of believers are taking part in the discipleship process of establishing lifestyles of Worship, Community, and Mission too! But the D Path is a tool designed to give ideas of biblical ongoing actions one could take to form habits that form key lifestyles of a disciple of Jesus.

The D Path is not meant to be “our way” that we think is the “best” or “right”. Ultimately it is a simple tool that helps give potential next steps to anyone looking to become & live more like Jesus. By having the lifestyles and habits there, it allows for the category to be considered when asking the Lord how He is getting your attention.

We think learning and living the D Path is best accomplished by what we call the HOW. Choosing an ongoing action, habit, or lifestyle to engage with because it seems like the Lord is leading you to invest there leads to freedom and joy in obedience. Often being told to obey in a particular way by a leader or bible study can lead to a sense of obligation. The point is this: sensing where God is leading you is so important. And thus the HOW was born.

#### *The HOW*

The HOW is Hearing from God, Obeying God, With others. We think that developing lifestyles of Worship, Community, and Mission is best done by asking God how He is leading you to take a step of obedience and doing so alongside other disciples. Historically we have found arbitrary steps that a leader tells group members to take feels like they are obeying the leader, not God. **Therefore, we think the HOW is so important that we would say the disciplines of the HOW are more important than accomplishing the actions on the D Path!**

So because we dream of equipping believers for a lifetime of following Jesus, we have formed Discipleship Groups for people to gather to learn and live the Discipleship Pathway by practicing the HOW together.

## What is a D Group?

A Discipleship Group is a group designed to facilitate learning and living the Discipleship Pathway by practicing Hearing from God, Obeying God, and doing that With others (the “HOW”). D groups are designed for each member contribute, develop one another, and engage with the presence of God in our lives, because we believe God's church flourishes when His people show up & use their gifts to build each other up.. The structure of leadership, coaching, and group facilitation has been shaped to invite individual ownership of one's faith and personal needs, while having the opportunity to grow close with a small group of others for mutual discipleship. **Every member's various spiritual and relational needs won't be met solely in this space, but this space helps to guide and give direction for those needs.**

Size: Groups are 3 to 5, with multiplication at 6 members generally no quicker than once a semester. We value the momentum and chemistry of groups, but also want to have a system that welcomes and has room for those who seek to disciple and be disciplined.

Participation: Anyone in a Home Group\* can join a D Group if they can agree to what it means to be a member of a D Group:

### [D Group Member Opt-in Agreement](#)

\*D groups are designed to be in addition to Home Group. Home Group is an essential part of the life and rhythms of our church's community (see ongoing action #6 of the D Path).

Attendance/group time: If someone can't make a group time, FaceTiming in, group phone calls, or rescheduling the group time is recommended as a first option!

If someone is not being committed to meeting regularly, tell your coach and ask your coach about how to bring that up if you need help doing so.

Invitation: D Groups are formed in conversation with the Home Group leaders and coach to start. Invitations will then be made by the “point person” of the group. Throughout the year, point people can coordinate with their coach about inviting more people to their group and how to do so. It is important that the group be willing to multiply if it means another person getting to be invited into this discipleship opportunity.

These groups are intended for believers. Discipleship is available to everyone, but these groups have a level of commitment and accountability and mutual discipleship where having the Holy Spirit is very important. If a non-believer is interested in joining a group, this is a great opportunity to have gospel appointments with people and explain the purpose of the group. Have a conversation with your coach if you are unsure about a situation in this vein.

Coaching: Each group has a “point person” who connects with a coach for direction, accountability, and to ask questions. This coach is available to every member of the group but meets regularly with the point person. This could be as little as 30 minutes every other week, because once the group gets up and going it can be pretty easy to facilitate.

Facilitation: To start, the point person will facilitate the group time (explained later). However, the point person will model/teach others in the group how to facilitate. Once comfortable, other members of the group will rotate with the point person to facilitate the conversation for that week. This includes taking time to pray and prepare for the meeting ahead of time as needed. By sharing the skill of D Group facilitation, our groups can more easily multiply once they reach capacity.

## How is a D Group?

Hearing from God and Obeying Him With others can be done in numerous ways! However, we have a template we'd like you to start with that we think can help with lifestyle-forming. The key is that all of this goes back to the Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:29-31, Luke 10:27) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). We ultimately organize D Groups as a tool to help us love God, love others, and make disciples. If you want to try things other than the template, please discuss that with your coach so that they know what the group is doing and that it still gets at the heart of the group's purpose.

### *The D Group Template*

1. Authentic check-in (up to 30 minutes)
2. Vision and reviewing the Bible reading of the past week (15 minutes)
3. Last week's next steps and celebration/feedback (15 minutes)
4. Take time to hear from God (10 minutes)
5. Share what you may be hearing and any next steps to obey this week (15 minutes)
6. Pray together (5 minutes)

### Authentic check-in (30 min)

- With authentic relationships as our way of life, the group will catch up on how each other are really doing. It's important to know what's really going on in each other's lives. It helps allow others to notice things God might be doing in your life!
- Staying here longer is fine, if needed! It could be a way to serve a brother or sister in Christ. But if you are consistently missing other components of the template for this, talk to your coach as it may be indicative of a dynamic in the group to address.
- Though there are many ways to go about having an authentic check-in, just telling people in the first D Group gathering that you will start each week with sharing what's really going on in each other's lives can set a good expectation for members. If you just tell people that it is how you start D Group each week, you don't really need a special prompt unless you think it could be good!

### *Examples*

- "I'd love to check in with you all and hear how you're *really* doing this week."
- "I thought we could start our time by sharing things we could use prayer for in our lives and spend time praying for each other as a way to know what's really going on and supporting each other"
- Share a high and low of the past week
- What has been affecting you most strongly this week?

- What's been on your mind the most this week?
- What stopped and made you think this week?

### Vision and reviewing the Bible reading of the past week (15 min)

#### *Vision*

- Facilitator prepares something to share with the group that reminds the group of the “why” of the Discipleship Pathway/HOW/D Groups to not lose focus or vision as to why the group is meeting. Consider connecting it to what you read in your Bible reading plan that week.

#### *Examples*

- This passage in Scripture was a good reminder to me of why Worship, Community, and Mission are worth pursuing...
- This passage in Scripture was a good reminder to me of why discipling one another and pursuing Christ-likeness is worth pursuing...
- Just a reminder that our purpose in gathering is to develop lifestyles as obedience to Jesus. We aren't just trying to accomplish one action per week, but we are actually trying to become more like Jesus through following His example repeatedly, and believing in God to continue the good work He started in us.
- I've seen some great fruit from our times together lately that reminds me why we do this...

#### *Bible Reading*

- A D Group will decide on a Bible reading plan together and have a chance to discuss what was read in the past week
- Think about the plan being accessible to everyone in the group, not something too lofty
- Encourage people to jot down observations they made or questions they had to bring to group. This way they won't forget and have a hard time answering questions.

#### *Examples*

- Did anything stand out to you in your reading this week?
- What questions did you have as you read?
- How did you notice Worship, Community, and or Mission in this passage?
- Has God been getting your attention with anything from our reading plan this week?

### Last week's next steps and celebration/feedback (15 min)

- Talk about how the last week's steps went. Celebrate the steps of faith that were taken. Offer grace, encouragement, and help for passivity or failure (1 Thess. 5:14).
- The goal is to help people grow in their faithfulness to what they said they would do, not make people feel bad or punish people. But we don't want to be unafraid to follow up and enable people to keep not following through.
- One way you could help people is by creating a shared note of sorts to write down next steps, and/or have someone set a reminder to text the group mid-week to remind everyone of their steps.
- If someone seems nonchalant about having missed their next steps consistently, it would be good to bring that up with them gently. Ask your coach for help if you need it!

### Examples

- “That’s ok you didn’t get to your step this past week. Why do you think that was?”
- “Sounds like you just forgot, which happens! Is there a way you could set yourself up well for this next week? Maybe set a reminder on your phone?”
- “Hey, was there anything about that step that made you not want to do it? Like any fear or insecurity that came up and played a factor in not getting to it? Would love to help encourage you and offer support, or do that with you if so!”
- “Hey way to take that step! Are you noticing God using that in any way?”
- “Hey great work this week, I know that required a lot of faith.”

### Take time to hear from God (10 min)

- We know God is continuing his work in us (Philippians 1:6).
- We have a “Hearing from God” document that you could share with the group for anyone who wants help at [NewLifeA2.org/CampusResources](http://NewLifeA2.org/CampusResources)
- During this time, individually ask God for help and discernment with what obedience looks like this week.
- Sit in silence, read Scripture, journal your thoughts, etc.
- Look through the Discipleship Pathway to see if any of the lifestyles, habits, or actions are things God is getting your attention with.
- **If you aren’t hearing something clearly from God in prayer or Scripture, you can make a decision in faith about how to obey God this week!!** There are many good steps of obedience that Jesus calls us to in the Bible and categorized in the D Path.
- You can invite people to pull up the D Path to look through as they pray if that tool would serve them.

A note on next steps and habit forming: Some times next steps will be varied each week, and sometimes it will look like working on a habit for multiple weeks in a row. Remember that the goal is to form lifestyles, and that won’t happen by only taking a single step per week. Feel encouraged to take multiple steps! You could ask at the beginning of a season/semester or even monthly if there is a lifestyle or habit in particular that you haven’t engaged much with that you feel like God may be leading you to focus on. These types of self-evaluation are more likely to produce lifestyles than just picking a single action each week. Remember that the actions are intended to be ongoing that they may form habits that form lifestyles!

This is all done by prayer and hearing from God where you think He is leading and growing you.

### Share what you may be hearing and any next steps to obey this week (15 min)

- After sharing how God is getting your attention, share how you want to respond with faith and obedience
- If someone didn't hear anything or doesn't have a step of obedience, spend some time helping them decide what they will do this week. If someone heard, but doesn't want to do their step of obedience, take that opportunity to extend grace and brainstorm what might be a good intermediate step to take in the right direction.
- Ask the group for help where you need it! As facilitator you may have to remind people to think through this lens at first. Most of us have a deeply ingrained belief that we must go it alone, and for this to change we must remind each other it isn't true. Examples of help: going with someone to do something scary. Praying for someone's step as it is

happening. Texting someone throughout the week to ask if they followed through on something. Etc.

- Consider taking a step of obedience with someone else. Is there a way someone could join you in this action or you in theirs this week? This life on life component is key
- Help someone to make it concrete and achievable. This will help them decide for themselves what it means to be obedient to what they heard and have integrity to do what they said they would do. It will also help the group know how to ask them about how it went. If someone can't get very concrete, that's okay; there is mystery in how God leads us and sometimes we only get a part of the picture. But, if it becomes a pattern where someone isn't actually ever doing anything because it's too nebulous, it can be indicative of not really wanting to know what God is saying, or not really wanting to obey.

### Examples

- “Hey, I hear that you want to be more in prayer this week, is there a way you could make that measurable, so that you can say next week whether or not you were faithful to that?”
- “Just so you can look back next week and say you were faithful, is there any way you can make that more specific or clear? Or you can think about it more and text us what you want to do?”
- “Hey it seems like a couple of us wanted to engage in similar things, do you want to find a time to do that together this week?”

### Pray together

- Dedicate your week & areas of obedience by faith to the Lord. The ultimate goal is to be following Jesus and taking these steps from a place of depending on him (John 15:5).
- You can pray for the group, invite another to pray, or all pray!

***The goal of all of these steps is to have regularly set aside time to engage with how God is getting our attention in life (Hearing from God), how we will choose to respond (Obey Him), and to give and receive support along the way as well as doing actions with one another (With others).***

### **Point People**

#### Responsibilities

The point person's responsibilities are:

- Leading through the DG weekly rhythm
- To be faithful in leading by example
- Showing grace and maintaining accountability for others in group
- To train the other members to facilitate the space
- To be at coaching

#### Qualifications:

- Believer
- Gospel-centered for self and others
- Faithful
- Upholds New Life's [statement of faith](#)

- Models & actively builds lifestyles of worship, community & mission
- Has done all 12 of the D Path actions at least once.

Oversight:

Point people are coached by the Home Group coach for the Home Group they are in. It is an opportunity for the point person to share updates on how the group is going and ask for help. It is a space to get help on more intense shepherding needs arising, as well as help in how to navigate dynamics in group that seem off, or elements of the template that have been challenging for the group.