

STEPS FOR
DISCIPLING
A NEW
BELIEVER

new
life _{in}
Christ

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The Evangelical Covenant Church

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Introduction

ASIDE from Sunday School classes, small groups, and the teaching that happens from the pulpit each week, the discipleship of a new believer will be most effective when careful and personal attention is given to each individual's growth as a disciple of Jesus. Just as a new born baby needs care and attention, so does each person who is new to the faith. The provision of this care is the responsibility of all members of the church; not just the pastor or some of the leaders. The apostle Paul writes, "Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well" (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, TNIV). Paul teaches us to care for each new believer as a mother cares for her new child.

And so we ask, how can we come alongside a person who is starting his or her life with Christ? How do we accompany him or her on the journey of growth in Christ? How do we teach someone who is new to the faith what it means to follow Jesus?

Your presence and companionship play an important role in the growth process in the life of a new believer. Get ready to invest time with a person, to meet with him or her (at least once a week), and to help this new believer take the first

steps that are necessary to grow in faith. In this guide you will find suggestions for how you can come alongside this person during this time that is so foundational for faith formation.

Preparation

PREPARE yourself spiritually through prayer, asking to become an instrument of grace in the hands of God. Ask God to cleanse you, transform you, and produce in you all that is necessary to accompany the new believer in a way that is pleasing to God and a blessing to both of you.

Seek out someone who is new to the faith and offer to spend time with this person as he or she decides to intentionally invest in this journey of discipleship.

Together, decide on how often you will meet (eg., each week), how long you will meet (eg., 45 minutes), and how many weeks/months you will meet (eg., six weeks). Knowing the time commitment in advance gives the person a good idea of what will be required.

It's recommended that these meetings or discipleship encounters be with a person of the same sex in a place that is comfortable and safe for both of you.

Prepare yourself by studying the word of God and diligently reading the biblical texts provided in this guide. You do not need to use all

of the biblical texts outlined in each session when you meet. Rather, choose those that are most important to guide you in your time together. Suggest that the person read at home those passages that you don't read together.

The following lays out in more detail how you can accompany the new believer as he or she takes these important first steps to grow in his or her relationship with God.

Plan for Meeting Together

- Session 1: New Birth
- Session 2: Commitment to Grow
- Session 3: Prayer
- Session 4: The Word of God
- Session 5: Obedience to God
- Session 6: God our Father and Creator
- Session 7: Jesus Christ our Savior
- Session 8: The Holy Spirit who gives us Life
- Session 9: Life in Community
- Session 10: Our Mission

Preparing for your Time Together

WHEN you meet together, seek to create a comfortable, welcoming space that is safe for both of you. If the person has agreed to meet with you, it is because God is at work and has something to reveal to this person at this moment in his or her life. Whether life is going well, or the person is experiencing difficulty, it is important to create a comfortable space where he or she can meet with God to receive rest, encouragement, instruction, and support.

Be punctual and respectful of the other person's time. Don't arrive late or try to extend the meeting time longer than what you've agreed

upon. It's important that the person feel free either to leave or to stay and continue talking, but you don't want the person to feel pressured into staying longer than the agreed upon time.

Receive the person in a natural way that shows you are genuinely interested in his or her life. Ask the person how the week has gone, how he or she has been feeling, etc. If it's appropriate, open your time with prayer, asking God to give each of you peace. Invite the Lord to be present with you and to guide your time together.

Biblical Foundation

At the beginning of your meeting, present a brief introduction to the biblical foundation that you will be focusing on together.

Don't spend more than 15 minutes on the introduction and make sure you leave space for the person to participate and ask questions. Remember, it's not what *you* have to say that's important, but how the person is developing a genuine interest in knowing God and growing as a disciple of Christ.

Reflection and Sharing

Leave time for listening to God and meditating on what Scripture has to teach you. Invite the person to spend some time praying. Don't worry if he or she doesn't show great interest in praying at first; God is patient and growth is a process – it's not instantaneous.

End your time together offering up a word of thanks and praise to God for the specific things you've learned and asking for guidance and protection in the coming week.

Establish the time and place of your next meeting.

New Birth

Purpose

CREATE a space where the new believer can learn about the new life he or she has in Christ.

Prayer of Preparation

As you prepare to join this new believer on the journey of discovering the new birth and new life he or she has in Christ, present yourself before God in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the truth and give you the ability to listen to the voice of God.

Biblical Foundation

THE purpose of this meeting is to affirm the new birth that comes as a result of accepting Christ as Lord and Savior. What happens when a person opens his or her heart to Jesus? How does the Bible explain this?

Before your time together, meditate on the following biblical texts and respond to the questions mentioned above. This will provide you with necessary instruction as you mentor and disciple the person in his or her journey of formation and growth.

Meditate on the following biblical texts and

write what they teach you about:

- *God and human beings:* Psalm 24:1-2; Psalm 139:13-15; John 3:16; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23
- *Jesus Christ:* Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21
- *The work of Jesus Christ:* 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 1:12; 1 John 5:11-12; John 3:17

Reflection and Sharing

HERE are several truths to share with the person you are discipling: God is love; God created human beings; humanity is separated from God because of sin; Jesus is the tangible expression of God's love; through Jesus we are made new and become part of the family of God.

Remember that the decision to surrender your life to Christ isn't merely a religious change, nor the product of emotional manipulation. Rather, it is a response to the love of God expressed in the person of Jesus Christ, through the recognition that we need forgiveness through repentance.

Before you close your time together with prayer, encourage the person to initiate or continue to read the Bible daily. For example, suggest that he or she read a chapter of the Gospel of John each day, or one of the psalms. Make sure to show the person where these books

can be found in the Bible.

Closing Prayer

OFFER praise for what God has done for humanity and for creation. Give thanks for the privilege of knowing God and receiving new

life. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and power to believe and live according to this new life that you have received through Jesus. Entrust the life of the new believer into God's hands, praying for protection and provision for both the person and his or her family.

Commitment to Grow

Purpose

SUPPORT *the new believer in his or her commitment to grow in the knowledge and grace of God, as the person continues on this journey of new life in Christ.*

Prayer of Preparation

As you prepare to join the new believer on the journey of growing in his or her relationship with Jesus Christ, present yourself before God in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the truth and give you the ability to listen to the voice of God.

Biblical Foundation

RECEIVING Christ into our lives as our Lord and Savior implies a high level of commitment. In accepting the invitation to live with Jesus the new believer begins a fascinating journey as a disciple of Jesus. Study the biblical passages below, which encourage us to follow the call to grow as disciples. Observe carefully how this growth happens within the context of community when we remain rooted in Jesus Christ and God's word.

Meditate on the following biblical texts and

write what they teach you about:

- *The call to grow:* 1 Peter 2:2-3; Ephesians 4:15
- *Relationships with other believers:* Hebrews 10:23-25; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 John 1:3
- *The call to remain rooted in Christ:* John 15: 1-5

Reflection and Sharing

FOLLOWING are some of the basic ideas to share with the person you are discipling: we should cultivate the desire to commit to growing; we are called to grow in love; our growth happens in community because now we are members of the family of God; we should grow in our knowledge of Jesus; we can grow and bear fruit if we're rooted in Christ.

Closing Prayer

PRAISE God that we have the privilege of being called God's children, that we have been given the word of God which enables us to grow, and as part of God's family, we can grow together in love. Give thanks to God who produces growth and transformation in our life so that we may bear fruit. Ask God that the person may experience the love of God through community. Pray that the Lord would protect the word that has been sown in the new believer's life.

Prayer

Purpose

SHARE *with the new believer about the privilege that we have to communicate with God through prayer.*

Prayer of Preparation

As you prepare to join this new believer on the journey of growing in his or her relationship with God through prayer, present yourself before God in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the truth and give you the ability to listen to the voice of God.

Biblical Foundation

PRAYER is one of the best ways you can prepare yourself to meet with the person you are discipling. Pray that you would continue to grow and develop a life of prayer so that you may serve as a model for this new believer. He or she will learn how to pray by watching how you pray. Remember, praying is not only for experts in the Christian faith; it is for all believers and is a response to the new life we have in Christ.

Meditate on the following biblical texts and write what they teach you about:

- *Reasons to pray:* Psalm 65:2; Matthew 7:7-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18
- *How to pray:* Matthew 6:5-13; Philippians 4:6-7
- *Obstacles in prayer:* James 1:6-7; Psalm 66:18

Reflection and Sharing

ACCORDING to the Bible, we pray because we know God hears us. One of the things we do in prayer is to present our petitions to God. When we pray we are aware of God's presence and continual help in all circumstances. Some of the obstacles that get in the way when we pray are our own doubts and sin.

Closing Prayer

GIVE thanks today that we can communicate with God through prayer. Ask God to help you continue to cultivate this life of prayer in the days ahead. May words of praise spring up from your heart as you think about God's goodness and faithfulness. May prayers of praise, worship, thanksgiving, and petition flow from your life as you discover new ways to pray and communicate with God.

The Word of God

Purpose

ILLUSTRATE for the new believer how God communicates with us today in different ways, specifically through Jesus Christ, the Bible, and creation.

Prayer of Preparation

As you prepare to join this new believer on the journey of growing in his or her relationship with God through the study and meditation of the word of God, the Bible, present yourself before God in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the truth and give you the ability to listen to the voice of God.

Biblical Foundation

THE LAST meeting time emphasized the communication we have with God through prayer. During this time together, the emphasis is on listening to the voice of God as you read the Bible. Begin your preparation by asking that God would be revealed to you through the Scripture. Listening to the voice of God is a spiritual practice that is cultivated in our daily walk with God. That is why it is so important to take time daily to meditate on Scripture, providing an example of how a disciple remains in and obeys

the word of God.

Meditate on the following biblical texts and write what they teach you about:

- *The voice of God:* Hebrews 1:1-2; Psalm 19:1-4; Psalm 19:7-1
- *The Bible as the word of God:* 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12-13

Reflection and Sharing

GOD communicates with human beings through creation, the Bible, and especially through the person of Jesus Christ. The Bible is our primary source for hearing the voice of God and growing in our understanding of God. The Bible not only teaches, it corrects, instructs, prepares, and guides us. It helps us to discern different aspects of our lives, as we seek to grow as disciples of Christ.

Closing Prayer

IN CLOSING your time together, give thanks that God communicates with us because God wants to be in relationship with us. Praise God for sending Jesus, the ultimate expression of God's desire to be in relationship with us. Pray that our ears would be attentive to hear what God has to say through the Bible and that we would remain rooted in it.

Obedience to God

Purpose

HIGHLIGHT *that new life in Christ requires obedience in order that we may grow in a good and healthy relationship with God.*

Prayer of Preparation

As you prepare to join this new believer on the journey of obedience and listening to God speak through Scripture, present yourself before God in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the truth and give you the ability to listen to the voice of God.

Biblical Foundation

OBEEDIENCE distinguishes a true disciple of Jesus Christ from a person who is not a disciple. When you surrender your life to Jesus, you submit to God and recognize the authority that God has over your life. Thank God for the areas in your life that you have surrendered to Christ and ask for help in identifying those areas that you continue to hold on to.

Meditate on the following biblical texts and write what they teach you about:

- *Our response to the voice of God:* John 15:4-10; 1 John 2:3-6; Luke 11:28; James 1:22
- *Reasons why we obey:* John 14:21; Deuteronomy 10:12-13; Hebrews 3:7-8

Reflection and Sharing

OBEEDIENCE is related to hearing the voice of God through the Scripture. Obedience means remembering and holding onto what God says to us through the Bible. In obedience we are transformed. Obedience is an expression of love for God as we keep the commandments God has given us. God desires for us to hear his voice and obey; this brings great joy.

Closing Prayer

EXPRESS your willingness to listen to God's voice as you read the Bible. Ask God to bless you each day with understanding and willpower that you may be open to obey what God has to teach you. Pray that every obstacle would be removed from your mind and heart so that you may be open to obeying God in everything.

God our Father and Creator

Purpose

PROVIDE *the new believer with biblical texts that speak of God as Father and Creator.*

Prayer of Preparation

As you prepare to join this new believer on the journey of growth and coming to know God as Father and Creator, present yourself before God in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the truth and give you the ability to listen to the voice of God.

Biblical Foundation

The new life in Christ is the beginning of a new and close relationship with God as Father. Prepare for your time together fueled by the desire for the new believer to understand God's role as Father as presented in Scripture. This relationship is one of healing, restoration, and hope. Knowing that God is both Creator and loving Father will create a sense of confidence in God even in hard and difficult times.

Meditate on the following biblical texts and write what they teach you about:

- *God as Father and Creator:* John 1:12;

Ephesians 1:3-5; Psalm 139:13-14;
Psalm 100

- *What God asks of us:* Psalm 34:1;
John 4:23-24
- *The character of God:* Matthew 6:6;
James 1:17

Reflection and Sharing

God has always desired for us to be a part of the family and has therefore extended the invitation for us to believe and receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord. We are adopted as children who are loved by God. It is God who has made us in our mother's womb; we are God's creation and our response should be one of love and worship. God is our good and heavenly Father who gives all good things.

Closing Prayer

In an attitude of worship, lift up your prayer of thanks for the love and care given by God. Give thanks for the opportunity to be God's children who are loved and able to count on God's presence and care in times of need, loneliness, and pain. Pray that in the days to come, the new believer may experience God as the good Father; that he or she may receive healing and restoration from past hurts

by a father or from a father who has been an inadequate role model.

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Christ Jesus our Savior

Purpose

EXPAND *the vision that the new believer has of Jesus Christ, while helping him or her to see Jesus as the way, the truth, the life, and the only mediator between God and humans.*

Prayer of Preparation

As you prepare to join this new believer on the journey of growing to know Jesus as Savior, present yourself before God in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the truth and give you the ability to listen to the voice of God.

Biblical Foundation

STUDY and meditate on the following Scripture passages that can help expand your understanding of who Jesus Christ is. Affirm these truths in your own life and share them with the person, not as a lesson to learn, but as something that has transformed your life.

Meditate on the following biblical texts and write what they teach you about:

- *Who is Jesus Christ:* John 1:1-2; John 14:6
- *Jesus as Creator:* John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-19

- *Jesus as Savior and Redeemer:* John 3:16; 1 John 4:14;
- *Jesus as Mediator:* 1 Timothy 2:5
- *The second coming of Christ:* John 14:1-4; Acts 1:11

Reflection and Sharing

ACCORDING to the above passages, Jesus is eternal. He is creator, not a creation or an angel, but God made human. Jesus is the revelation of God. Jesus is the way, which indicates that there are no other ways to God. Jesus is the truth and the life. He was creator alongside the Father, and it's through Jesus that all things were made. Jesus is also Savior and he will come again to redeem all of creation. Jesus is the only mediator between God and humans.

Closing Prayer

COME to God in prayer and give praise for the life of Jesus. Honor and praise Jesus for becoming God with us in the flesh and for being the way to the Father, the truth, and the life. Recognize Jesus as Savior and Redeemer. Ask God to help you to grow in hope as you anticipate Jesus' return. Pray that your families and friends would come to a living faith in Jesus.

The Holy Spirit who Transforms Us

Purpose

GUIDE *the new believer in exploring the Bible so that he or she can learn what it says about the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity.*

Prayer of Preparation

As you prepare to join this new believer on the journey of experiencing the Holy Spirit as one who is real and transforms lives, present yourself before God in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the truth and give you the ability to listen to the voice of God.

Biblical Foundation

WITH the guidance of the Holy Spirit, meditate on the following Scripture passages. Let them reveal to you more about who the Holy Spirit is and the influence the Holy Spirit has in the life of a believer.

Meditate on the following biblical texts and write what they teach you about the Holy Spirit:

- *And you:* 1 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:14; Ephesians 1:13
- *As comforter:* John 14: 15-17

- *As fountain of love:* Romans 5:5
- *And the Spirit's power and gifts:* Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Reflection and Sharing

AFTER reflecting on the previous Scripture passages, discuss the following together: the Holy Spirit assures us of Christ's presence in our lives; as comforter; seals us as God's possession; gives us power to share with others about Jesus; gives us gifts which we can use to serve the church and the world.

Closing Prayer

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with power, with God's presence, and especially with the conviction that you belong to Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring you both comfort and strength. Be ready to receive what God has for you and to experience the presence of God wherever you are. Ask the Spirit to prepare you with the necessary spiritual gifts so that you may serve the church and the world.

Life in Community

Purpose

CREATE an awareness of the interpersonal relationships that make up the church.

Prayer of Preparation

As you prepare to join this new believer on the journey of understanding what the Bible says about life in community, present yourself before God in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the truth and give you the ability to listen to the voice of God.

Biblical Foundation

USE the following Scripture passages to study some of the fundamental aspects of life in community. Pay attention to the dynamics of new relationships and expectations that develop within the family of God, in other words, the church. Think about the aspects that have been positive in your experience as part of a church community and be ready to share these experiences.

Meditate on the following biblical texts and write what they teach you about:

- *The church*: Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 2:19
- *The call to meet together*: Hebrews 10:9-25; Acts

2:44-47

- *Baptism*: Acts 2:38,41; Acts 2:41-43
- *The Lord's Supper*: Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
- *Service*: Acts 2:32-34; Acts 2:44-47

Reflection and Sharing

HAVING in mind the previous Scripture passages, talk with the person you're discipling about the fact that they now belong to a new family – the community of believers. Let this person know that he or she is welcomed into the family. Talk about the importance of meeting with a church community to build new relationships and to participate together in this new community. As a member of this family, one of the ways the new believer can testify to the commitment he or she has made to follow Christ is through the sacrament of Baptism. Also, as a believer, forgiven through Jesus Christ, he or she may also participate in the Lord's Supper (communion). The person now has the privilege of serving inside and outside of the church.

Closing Prayer

WITH an attitude of joy, thank God for providing a community of believers with whom we can grow and receive encouragement and

strength. Give glory to God for the privilege of belonging to this community and having the opportunity to serve and participate in the Lord's

Supper. Pray that God would strengthen your relationships with those inside of the church, that you may experience authentic community.

Purpose

ACCOMPANY *the new believer as he or she learns more about the privilege it is to be called to share the good news of Jesus with others.*

Prayer of Preparation

As you prepare to join this new believer on the journey of carrying out the mission that God has given us, present yourself before God in prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to the truth and give you the ability to listen to the voice of God.

Biblical Foundation

ACCEPTING Christ into our lives means accepting his love, salvation, mission, and commandments. When a person experiences the joy of new life that is found in Jesus, he or she desires to share this new faith with others. Do you remember what it was like when you first asked Christ to be your Savior? This is an opportunity for God to rekindle your passion for communicating the Gospel with others.

Meditate on the following biblical texts and write what they teach you about:

Our Mission

- *The proclamation of the Gospel:* Matthew 28:16-20; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21
- *Our function as salt and light:* Matthew 5: 13-16; 2 Timothy 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:1-5
- *The work of the Holy Spirit:* Acts 1:8

Reflection and Sharing

As a child of God, the new believer can come to understand that he or she now forms part of the family of God. In this new family, that is the church, he or she can now be salt and light in different ways, sharing the good news of Jesus. It is important to remember that we are not sent out alone on the mission. We have the Holy Spirit, who has the power to transform lives.

Closing Prayer

WITH thanksgiving and praise tell God how thankful you are to be part of such a dynamic community that has been called to announce the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ, and the gift of new life. Give thanks that you have been made salt and light in a world that is often clouded in darkness. Commit your life and the life of the new believer to the work of the Holy Spirit, so that you may be witnesses of God's love and grace to others.

Conclusion

Follow-up

AFTER completing these 10 encounters in discipleship with the new believer, the spiritual journey of this person has just begun and should continue. One way to encourage continued growth and discipleship is through a short devotional guide entitled *Grow*. This resource can be found on the Covenant website at www.covchurch.org/resource.

Type the words “grow Bible study” in the search box.

Other resources are also available and one in particular may help the person become actively involved in a church community. Many churches offer new member classes and may choose to use the curriculum *Mission Friends*, which is also available on the Covenant website.