

Tips for Starting a Discipleship Ministry in Your Church

HOW TO START

A discipler

Begin by securing a good, small group facilitator who has the gift of teaching and/or encouragement – someone who loves people and is willing to pour him/herself into a small group of believers. The pastor might want to start the ministry. At some point in time it will be good to have the pastor endorse the ministry by his involvement in leading a group.

A discipler's guide

Secure a copy of the *Discipler's Guide for Discipleship Training: A Venture in Training and Accountability* by Dr. Charles Lake. The user-friendly guide, inserted in the back pocket of the *Disciple's Manual*, directs the discipler through the process of discipling believers. Have the discipler familiarize him/herself with the material.

An elective

Remember that Discipleship Training must be an elective. It can be scheduled during the Sunday School or any other educational small group activity throughout the week. It should never be imposed upon an existing group without their “buying into” the commitment.

Some disciples

Add a small group (preferably 6 to 12 individuals), recruited for the purpose of starting a new ministry. Hopefully, there will be potential disciplers in the group who will later help expand the ministry. You can determine the mix of the group as to male and female, young and old.

Inform the participants in advance of the expectations of their participation:

- perfect attendance with only two make-up sessions possible
- one hour a week class sessions for nine weeks
- a daily quiet time for a minimum of 15 minutes per day
- memorization of one to three verses of Scripture each week
- prayer with a prayer partner once weekly

A commitment in advance is essential to the success of the group.

Time and place

Set an appropriate day, time, and place for the meeting. The group can meet in a smaller room of the church or in the living room of a home. It is best that they meet around a table.

Disciples' manuals

Secure copies of the *Disciple's Manual of Discipleship Training: A Venture In Training and Accountability* for each participant. It is best the disciple pay for at least half, if not all, of the cost of the manual.

Begin

Encourage the discipler to stay within the allotted time, but at the same time be flexible to address the issues and concerns that come from the participants. Encourage the discipler to be looking for potential disciples who can help expand the ministry to additional levels. Levels should always be taken in sequential order.

Build

As the ministry continues, choose a Lay Director of Discipleship. Identify quality disciples. Set up an evaluation system to evaluate disciples. During the last class session allow disciples to fill in an evaluation. (Find a suggested format in the TIPS section of the website or secure copies from Growth Ministries) Have the Lay Director collect and summarize the evaluations and relay the information to the discipler.

Consider an annual Discipler Training session. Build your own agenda confronting issues that emerge during the year. Allow disciples an opportunity to share with one another their joys and challenges in discipling.

Be on the lookout for maturing Christians!