



FOR THE DISCIPLE MAKER

LEADER'S MANUAL

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TO THE DISCIPLE MAKER:

GO MAKE
DISCIPLES...
TEACHING THEM
TO OBEY ALL
THAT I HAVE
COMMANDED
YOU.

MATTHEW 28:19-20

At its core the CLOSER method is a way of studying your Bible. However, knowledge is not the goal. The goal is transformation that leads to multiplication. Jesus called us to not only be disciples, but to be disciple-makers (Matthew 4:19 and 28:19-20).

Simply put, discipleship is learning to follow Jesus so that we can teach others to do the same.

Since we know that effective discipleship doesn't always come naturally, we have provided you with discipleship tips and conversation starters on the next few pages. These pieces of the CLOSER method are designed to equip you to be an effective disciple and disciple-maker of Jesus. They contain ideas, truths, and prompts that will guide you into more meaningful discipleship connections. These, in partnership with the truth in God's Word, will bring you closer in community and closer to Him and His plan for you.

CLOSER GROUPS

LEADER'S MANUAL

FOR OUR CLOSER LEADERS:

In all Christian leadership, the private personal life is more important than anything else. Serving the women God gives you is noble. But, He cares so much for your own personal growth, we hope you do not neglect that in your service to God.

For that reason, we urge you to spend time daily in prayer and Bible Study. Do this for yourself first and your ladies second. In fact, we recommend you keep your personal study separate from the Closer study. Your personal study is when God speaks to you. Your Closer study can easily bring your thoughts to your ladies. Both are good so do not neglect one and keep the other.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

We ask, as members of Grace Community Church, that you always teach or keep the doctrines of our faith. The Statement of Faith is included in this manual.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Ask God who He wants you to add to your group. Ideally, our ladies will be in different stages of growth. Purpose to vary it as much as it depends on you.

As soon as you have your ladies, our goal is to keep you together for one year or three 10-week sessions. You do not have to lead all the sessions, but we hope that you will. We are hoping that by streamlining the tasks and expectations, your focus will be on leading for 30 weeks. The material will always be provided to you and your ladies. We do not expect the leaders to provide the workbook to their women. Encourage them to get their own copy by attending the Opening or from the Community Director.

Listen to the training podcasts. They are short trainings that share facilitating tips to keep your group running smoothly. Become proficient in leading using Zoom or another platform if you are planning on meeting virtually. If you meet in person, choose the space that best suits your group.

CLOSER GROUPS

ONCE YOU BEGIN

Our goal is to provide three 8-week studies. They will be book ended by an Opening and a Celebration. The Opening event is when we invite ladies to experience the CLOSER Study. Although a primarily fun, free-flowing event, we will give an overview of the CLOSER method as well as provide an overview to the book we are studying.

Each week we ask that you:

- Prepare well: we suggest you read the assigned passage daily and read it in different versions.
- Do your study: this includes *all* questions, reading the Discipleship Tips, Closer Conversation questions and Final Thoughts. No other commentary is necessary.
- Pray for your ladies. And remember, pray for yourself too!
- Once your lesson is done, reread it taking your group into consideration. This is a good time to:
 - Write an Opening (What is this? Check out Podcast #4.)
 - Place times next to each question. This helps you stay on point.
 - Reword questions if you think it will help. You may even want to star a question that you want to spend extra time on. You know your ladies.

ONCE YOU BEGIN (CONTINUED)

- If you have time, watch the teaching video. They will be loaded on our YouTube Channel for you.
- That's it!

DURING THE STUDY

On the first time together:

Spend time with introductions. Look at the Closer Conversations as a way to help you.

Also, go over your Healthy Guidelines. This is the kindest thing you can do for your women as it sets the expectations of your group. We have included them in this manual.

Prayer:

You can do this however you like. Always open and end in prayer. But, you decide how you want to handle requests. Some suggestions can be found on Podcast #5.

If you find your lady needs extra attention...

Please encourage your group to lean in. This is a good way to help them to become disciples and not just consumers. For example, one lady is walking through a difficult season, could you ask someone in your group to provide her a meal? Or give her a call mid-week.

CLOSER GROUPS

DURING THE STUDY CONTINUED

If you get an answer that seems off...

Address it in a one-on-one telephone call or allow another member to lead. For example, one lady shares that she is disciplined by another woman. You learn that the woman is 1) not a believer and 2) just enforcing the rules. In a private one-on-one conversation, we could share examples of how Christ disciplined using Scripture.

If you have an over-talker...

First, pray. Sometimes you can ask if there is someone else who may want to share that we have not heard from. But, there may be a time when you have to address it in a one on one telephone call. Having balanced sharing is worth the effort in addressing our over-talker.

If you do not think they have made a step of faith...

Yippee! We hope to win many to Jesus. Walk through the steps to salvation with them. Seek out others to pray for you before you do!

If someone comes to your study, shares that they have had a bad day and would like to talk about it instead of the study...

DURING THE STUDY CONTINUED

We totally get it. We have bad days too! But, our purpose is to go through the study at the appointed time. Reading through Scripture will lift any believer's mood. After the study, listen well and pray.

If you get through all the questions and have extra time...

By all means use the Discipleship Tips, Closer Conversations, perhaps a question from the teaching, and/or discuss the Final Thoughts

AFTER THE STUDY

After your time together:

- Stop and pray. Thank the Lord for being faithful to your prayers.
- Take a brief time to re-evaluate the evening, looking at the questions and asking the Lord if there may have been an answer that was 'off' or maybe needed a bit more. Jot down a few notes that you can have in front of you when you contact them throughout the week.

CLOSER GROUPS

AFTER THE STUDY CONTINUED

- Contacting your ladies during the week can be done by text, call, FB message. Whatever works for your schedule. But, we feel this is the best place to meet one-on-one with your ladies to encourage them, address a concern that you took a note on, etc. We have put a few tips on how to do this in the training Podcast.
- Take your attendance and record it in Planning Center (or whatever your church uses.)
- Send out the training videos to each lady.
- That's it!

THE CLOSING CELEBRATION

Invite everyone to the Celebration. This is a time when ladies get to hear from other groups and get to know other ladies. They won't want to miss this, so make it a point to let everyone know that they are wanted there!

The main focus of the Celebration is testimony. We want to give ladies an opportunity to share what they learned throughout their time together. Ladies will be encouraged to share their testimonies of what God has done in their life during the 8-weeks: either through the study or the discipleship experience. Testimony is a powerful thing, so encourage all of your ladies to be brave and share- even if it is something small. Prepare them ahead of time for this so that they will be ready.

CLOSER GROUPS

HEALTHY GUIDELINES

Our hope is to create a safe and relational environment where we can increase our Bible literacy and share what we're learning. We want our women to not just know the Word but also how to apply God's word to our everyday lives. Part of being an intentional leader who seeks to create a relational environment means we need to create healthy guidelines. Please use these guidelines as a foundation to build upon for the health and safety of your group. They do not need to be read each week. Read them the first time you are together and refer to them occasionally as you lead.

SAFE GROUP: We will all do our part to create an environment where everyone can be real, open and honest with their struggles and victories.

CONFIDENTIALITY: What is said in group stays in the group.

LISTEN: Let's value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Try to avoid thinking about how you are going to respond or what you are going to say next.

PAUSE: Allow a pause in conversation after someone shares to give the person sharing the chance to finish and the group the opportunity to consider what was just shared before responding.

NO "CROSS TALK": Be considerate of others as they are sharing. No side conversations.

SILENCE: It is important to allow silence in the group as it provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members in the group to process the topic or question being considered.

NO FIXING: We are not here to fix each other. Jesus does that part. Give encouragement; speak truth and point to Jesus. Don't try to solve or fix each other.

NO RESCUING: When people are sharing something deeply personal, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation by providing immediate condolences. This will often cause them to stop sharing. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

SHARING: Be sensitive about the amount of time you share.

BE SELF-AWARE: Be self-aware of how you are personally affecting the environment through your words, actions and non-verbal communication.

USE "I" STATEMENTS: It's easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them", "the church", "us", "we", etc.

CONFLICT: We will commit to resolve conflict biblically. When conflict or sin issues between group members arise, we want to make sure that we are honoring God and each other in the way we deal with issues.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

When and how did you come to know Christ? Where are you in your walk with Christ?

What is your goal through this study? What are you hoping to gain by the end?

In what area of life are you most in need of prayer? Areas to consider: work, school, Marriage, parenting, parents, Friendships, or personal holiness.

How do you draw near to God? What are some practical things that you do each day to grow closer to Jesus?

What gets in the way when you are trying to connect with God? Is it responsibilities, distractions, doubt, or something else?

What themes do you see being repeated in your life? Why?

What is your life story? What important events in your life seem to define you?

With whom do you need reconciliation? Pray through the situation together and ask the Lord for the right time and the right words.

Share a time that you felt cared for by a friend. What did that friend do that was special? Was it a thoughtful gift, a sacrificial act of service, or something else?

What sin pattern do you find yourself falling back into the most?

What truths about God do you often forget and need to be reminded?

What dreams do you have for your life? How would you like to be used by God?

What has God been teaching you lately?

DISCIPLESHIP TIPS

#1

Creating a safe environment to share is crucial for your discipleship relationship.

Transparency will happen when your disciples know that you are human and you struggle, too.

They need to see that Jesus is not just their Shepherd, but yours, as well. Consider sharing with them something that you had or have struggled with and what the Lord taught you through it.

#2

We all want meaningful relationships. The key is to ask good questions that let conversations unfold. As you discuss each others' responses to the weekly questions, listen for the heartfelt need or the unspoken struggle. Ask more questions if needed and then let the conversation go from there.

3

All sin is an attempt to fill a legitimate need (love, acceptance, purpose) in an illegitimate way (comfort, people pleasing, selfish ambition, control). Sin hinders spiritual growth and effectiveness. Therefore, discipleship seeks to point another to a healthier path that is free from the entanglements of sin (Hebrews 12:1-2, Galatians 6:1-2).

Prayerfully consider how you can do that for your disciple.

4

Goals are good to have when starting something new. In Matthew 4:19, Jesus called the first disciples and then told them His goal for them. He said, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Based on Jesus' example (also see Matthew 28:19-20), the ultimate goal of discipleship is to produce more disciples.

Don't let your discipleship become stagnant. Keep seeking to grow and to make more disciples. There should be an exit point where the teacher releases the student to go and do as they did for them.



DISCIPLESHIP TIPS

5

Discipleship isn't just about head knowledge. It's about a change of heart that initiates and eventually sustains a change in behavior. Remember that change is hard and doesn't happen overnight. Pray patiently for each other, remembering that you, too, are still on the journey.

6

Talk about ways to serve in the body of Christ. What are each of your spiritual gifts?

Do they overlap in a way that you could serve together? Part of discipleship is helping someone to grow in the use of their spiritual gifts and discovering their ministry within the church. Make this a regular part of your conversation.

#7

Jesus is Our Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). When discipling someone, always remember to point them to Him as their ultimate Guide, Protector, and Sustainer. Encourage them to see God's loving hand in all things and to ask Christ to fill them full.

#8

Spend time reflecting with your disciple about what you have learned and how you still want to grow. Set a plan for what is next in each of your journeys. Remember, the ultimate goal is growth for the purpose of multiplication.

How are each of you going to fulfill the commission to "go and make disciples"?



RESOURCES



Spiritual Growth Self-Assessment

This self-assessment is to be used to self-identify your stage of spiritual growth and to identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth.

Directions: Go across each row and circle the sentence that best describes you. Only select one for each row. When you have done all 8 rows, look to see which of the stages most of your answers fall. You will also easily see areas of strength and areas for growth. Prayerfully consider what you can do to work on your areas that need growth. Talk with your group leader or another mature believer.

	EXPLORING	BEGINNING	GROWING	MATURING	EQUIPPING
In Faith	My faith is not my own. I am unsure, but I want to know more.	My faith is my own, but it is private.	I exercise my faith mostly within church and family.	My faith is beginning to spread across all areas of my life and I am applying it outside of my home.	My faith has permeated all areas of my life. Almost everyone in my life knows I am a follower of Christ.
In Service	I am not serving because I don't know why I am supposed to serve.	I am aware of service opportunities and I am thankful for those who serve.	I serve on Sundays and can make small commitments.	I am trying out my areas of giftedness. I am willing to serve in roles that require some advance preparation.	I know my area of giftedness and am sacrificially using my time, talent, and treasures to serve at church. I have made a commitment.
In Sharing	I am asking others to share their faith with me.	My faith is new and still mostly private. I see the value in sharing my faith but I am not ready to share.	I talk to loved ones about their faith and my faith. I've begun seeking ways to share with others, too.	I am beginning to see how I can share my faith with others through outreach opportunities or personal evangelism.	I am an active disciple maker and I openly share my faith with others. I can discern when someone is seeking and open to the Gospel.
In Studying	I come to church and listen to sermons with a heart to understand.	I follow along with the Pastor on Sundays as he reads through passages.	I read my Bible to get ready for a small group or read a quick devotional.	I study the Bible regularly for the purpose of discovering answers to life's questions.	I am in the habit of studying my Bible daily for personal renewal and for teaching others.
In Relationships	I struggle in relationships because I find it difficult to see things from others' perspectives.	I hear others' perspectives, but I am not willing to give up my own needs.	I can accept others' perspectives and can see the value of compromise in relationships.	I understand others' perspectives and can sometimes give up my own desires for the benefit of others.	I have learned that the best things in life come from serving others and can freely give up my rights and desires most of the time.
In Giving	I am not giving to a church.	I give during Easter and Christmas, mostly out of feelings of obligation.	I believe I am supposed to give and give when there is excess in my budget.	I know the importance of giving and I give regularly.	I have experienced the joy of giving and so I look for opportunities to give over and beyond my regular giving.
In Conflict	I am prone to either fight or flee.	I fight against my desire to fight or flee, but feel ill-equipped to do so.	I try to actively listen and hear what the other person is saying.	I know that God's people are meant to live in community so I try to be a peacemaker.	I trust God as my ultimate Overseer and Shepherd. I can relinquish "fairness" for the sake of unity.
In Purpose	I see purpose in my role or my occupation, but I have never heard of purpose in church.	The concept of having purpose as it relates to God is a new concept that I am exploring.	I am beginning to see that I have a place in God's Church.	I have begun serving in my area of giftedness and I am seeing fruit, but I am not sure of my calling.	I see God's hand throughout my life and how he has used experiences, hardships, and current circumstances to reveal His calling for me.

where is MY
starting place?

Transformative Prayer Journal



Use this journal in between groups to keep up-to-date on your disciples prayer requests. Resist the urge to take requests for family members and friends, unless urgent. Remember, this is a time to focus on your disciples' growth.

Use your CLOSER Conversations to draw out requests. Encourage disciples to share these requests with the group outside of study time. This could be during social time or through other forums like a private Facebook Group or a group text.

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Turning an Outline into a Teaching



1. Read the passage. Complete the C, L and O portions of the CLOSER Still method on the next page.
2. When done, come back here and answer the questions in the margin.
3. From your answers on the two pages, compile a teaching below.

Opening

- The struggle:
- The bottom line:

Body

- Main Point #1
 - Explanation
 - Story/ Illustration
 - Cross Reference
- Main Point #2
 - Explanation
 - Story/ Illustration
 - Cross Reference
- Main Point #3
 - Explanation
 - Story/ Illustration
 - Cross Reference

**Remember, you can always change the order of the details to make them more logical for you. You also don't have to include a story or cross reference for each point.*

Closing

- Review
- Challenge

Questions to Consider

Think about your group. What are some of the struggles that they are facing that you saw in the text?

Are there any current events similar to what was going during the time of the text?

What are some stories from your life that illustrate the text? What wisdom did you learn?

Are there any play on words that you can use or recurring words that help to keep your points simple or memorable?

CLOSER Still

Matthew 14:1-36

Cross Reference

Write your answers below.

Choose one or two key verses from this week's section. Look for verses in other books of the Bible that will help to illuminate the truths of these key verses. If you have a study Bible, look in the margin beside those verses. If not, you can search cross references online. What new information do these cross references give?

List

Make a list of different events, topics, or conversations in the passage. This list should answer the question, "What is this section about?" Aim for 5-10 items on your list. The items can be written either in phrases or complete sentences.

Organize

Is there a way to group the verses in this section (according to similarities and differences, chronological order, or branches off of the key words)? Organize the verses using an outline, table, web, or picture. If you need more room, use the Other Notes section at the end of this week.

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