

This material was originally produced to assist our own local church's discipleship program. We have tried to "dis-enculturate" the material, and the steps are applicable in any local church....

Introduction:

So you've volunteered to be a 'discipler' or mentor. Congratulations! A 'mentor' is simply somebody who shows a new believer how to follow Christ and establish his / her life on godly principles.

Our church has many people who are capable of helping others to grow in their new-found faith in Jesus Christ. If we are willing to give up just one hour per week to put something into someone else's life, the benefits to our church will be immeasurable. Not to mention how blessed we ourselves will be too!

First, the lives of those having quality time spent with them will grow to maturity much faster as will their faith and understanding of the word.

Second, a greater bonding of relationships and stability in the church will develop as an emphasis of praying and caring for one another grows amongst us.

Third, but not least, the joy that comes from seeing those you have given time to growing and going on in the Lord is incomparable. It is a real honour to be able to take a new Christian or enquirer through the foundational steps of Christianity. God will truly reward you for the effort you are putting into others' lives. As our Lord Jesus says "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35). Not only will you experience the joy of seeing a new Christian grow but you will be blessed as well.

Doubt/fear:

The first thing that often happens when you are challenged to disciple somebody is that you are filled with doubt and sometimes fear. It is common to have negative thoughts about it like "I'd never be able to find the time" or "I don't really know enough about the Bible myself, what if I don't know the answers to their questions". People sometimes think "that person wouldn't really listen to what I've got to say" or even "I couldn't really get conversations started with that person, it just wouldn't work". Well, Satan often accuses and casts doubt and you need to prayerfully as the Lord to give you the strength and grace to be able to disciple somebody. How much do you need to know? You really only need to be one chapter ahead of the new disciple!!

Discipler Qualifications:

- ◆ Have a genuine love for the lost and the desire to see new believers grow to maturity in their new way of life.
- ◆ To be active in your personal prayer life, time in the word and devotions.
- ◆ Baptised in water and filled with the Holy Spirit (with the normative evidence of speaking in tongues).
- ◆ Be a consistent member of your own local church (including helping out in other areas).
- ◆ Regularly attend Sunday morning **and** either Sunday night or a home group or both
- ◆ Have been discipled or mentored yourself at some stage of your Christian journey
- ◆ Give regularly in a proportional manner and be able to explain why (our church practices regular giving of tithes, general offerings, and missions' offerings).
- ◆ If you are discipling someone who is a minor (under 18) you need to have signed Child Protection documentation (Attachments 3 and 4).
- ◆ Have become familiar with the "HNLC New Believers' Material" manual.

Starting off:

When dealing with a new Christian the first rule of thumb is to **assume nothing** – let them know there are no “dumb questions”! Gone are the days where people have a basic understanding of God and general principles of Christianity. Assuming a certain level of knowledge can be intimidating for the new Christian and makes being disciplined uncomfortable. Try to get on the same wavelength as him / her and encourage them to ask *anything*....

How fast should we go?:

The great thing about discipleship is that it is an ongoing relationship and you can go at their pace. This makes discussions more relaxed and enjoyable and ultimately effective because you are not on a set timetable. Continue to go through the core material and make sure it is covered, but feel free to discuss relevant issues that are raised that are off the set-out agenda. If you don't know the answer to a question simply say, “I'm not sure; I'll find out and get back to you”. There is no shame in doing this.

It is important to adjust the content and pace to suit the new believer. There is no point in finishing all the topics within three months if most of it has gone over their head. Take the time to ensure that real understanding is taking place.

Check out their literacy / reading skills. Again, **assume nothing**. Adjust your approach accordingly.

Involving church leadership

You are capable of discipling yourself without having to involve leadership in the weekly face-to-face contact. However you will need to keep relevant pastoral care oversight updated on how your discipling is going as they are responsible for caring for the flock. Here are some practical ways to make your leaders' follow-up and oversight more effective and less time-consuming.

- ◆ Liaise with the PCC (Pastoral Care Coordinator) every month on progress being made.
- ◆ Let the PCC know of any problems being experienced with the discipling process (in other words, keep the communication up).
- ◆ Ensure that your disciplee has completed and signed an information sheet (available from the ushers' table) including details of their address and birthdate, and make sure it has been given to the church administrator.
- ◆ Tell the PCC when you have completed the New Believers Material and are moving on to further study/discussion.
- ◆ Seek advice of church leaders whenever necessary. You don't have to go 'solo'
- ◆ If you don't know an answer, *ask* someone else more experienced, and then get back to him/her.
- ◆ If someone wants help from behavioural problems stemming from demonic influence, don't be afraid to exercise your authority, as a son of God, and invoke the name of our Lord Jesus over the power that's harassing them (this is becoming more and more common as young people are dabbling in things that are doorways into the occult - often unwittingly). Chapter 12 deals extensively with this area.
- ◆ If the person begins to share details you're not comfortable with, refer to the Hard Basket instructions!
- ◆ **The Hard Basket** - If you come across a too-hard-for-me situation, go get someone with more experience! There are other youth leaders / workers / ministers available. It is especially important that you involve another person the same gender as the disciplined person if confidential details start to surface. And particularly where sexual issues surface. Don't get

caught in the trap of being sworn to secrecy. **NEVER** agree to that. Let the person know you reserve the right to confidentially consult a trustworthy experienced believer should the necessity arise.

- ◆ If dealing with a minor (under 18) it is especially essential that you conduct yourself in an open and transparent manner:
- ◆ Try to establish relationships with the new believer's family and be wisely open with them about what you are doing.
- ◆ If possible, be the person who picks up / drops off the new believer – this improves relationships with them, their family, and encourages their attendance.
- ◆ Always encourage new believers to ask you *any* questions, but this also applies to parents / family. Let them know, by your actions and liaising with them, that you are “human” and not part of a cult trying to steal their child away. Be open with the family and encourage them to ask you questions, or even raise concerns. This shows you are a realistic person.

Practical things that need to be done:

- ◆ Make weekly contact with the new believer (seeing them – not just calling).
- ◆ Go through the New Believers' Material booklet weekly with the new believer.
- ◆ Be familiar with the church library so you can recommend appropriate literature if and when the need arises.
- ◆ Make sure the new believer has a (full TO / NT) Bible (preferably the NIV for studying).
- ◆ Encourage and monitor your new believers personal devotions (prayer and study). You may need to actually teach the skills necessary to study devotions. Encourage them to begin in a gospel such as Mark. Encourage your new believer to keep a journal of their personal devotions and prayer. Ask them, from time to time, to share with you what they have been learning.
- ◆ Encourage the new believer to testify of what God has done in their lives to you, the church, and to their non-believing friends and family.
- ◆ Look for opportunities to visit the home of the new believer and to wisely introduce the gospel to the rest of their family.
- ◆ Encourage the new believer to attend Sunday morning and / or evening if possible, as well as home groups and other relevant groups (youth, young adults etc); to **participate** in church life!
- ◆ Keep in mind that you are training a co-worker in the kingdom. They will do what you **do** rather than do what you **say**!
- ◆ Be aware to identify any possible need for deliverance – this is more common as our society abandons Christian standards and dabbles in activities that are based in the occult.
- ◆ Pray with the new believer weekly. Teach them how to pray in company.
- ◆ Pray for your new believer every day (find out any needs they have).
- ◆ Mix it up. Do something different occasionally – eg breakfast at McDonald's or a bike ride.
- ◆ Don't get so busy with your new believer that your own prayer life or family life falls apart. Keep it to one visit per week and the occasional phone call.

Thanks for your willingness to help another in the faith! You will receive your reward at the Bema seat of Christ!