

DP

discipleship partners

A Guide to Getting Started

York Alliance Church is seeking to be an outreach-based church, committed to exalting Christ and loving people by becoming disciples who make disciples. In all of this, prayer is the first work.

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Called to Discipleship

What comes to mind when you hear the word discipleship? A classroom? An accountability group? That's not exactly what Jesus had in mind. Discipleship is following Jesus Christ and modeling our lives after Him. Following comes in response to His calling. He called his first disciples this way:

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me," and I will make you fishers of men. Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

- Matthew 4:18-20

Disciples of Jesus are also called to make disciples. After his sinless life, brutal death, and miraculous resurrection, Jesus met his disciples on a mountain near the Sea of Galilee and spoke these immortal words: "Make disciples of all nations!" Jesus then told his followers how to make new disciples: go, baptize, and teach them to live in the same way that He lived.

The life of following Jesus and making disciples has a purpose: we're called to become like Jesus. This happens as one regularly beholds, loves and depends on the true God.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- 2 Corinthians 3:18

Overview of DPs

Discipleship Partners are not intended to be your sole form of community and connection with other believers. Instead, they serve a complementary role, along with Community Groups and a variety of other connections, toward the creation of a growing and healthy church body.

Discipleship Partners offer a greater degree of focus and intentionality in helping one another follow Jesus. We long for a healthy and multiplying church that is full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another in the Gospel. Paul speaks of the church in Rome similarly:

“I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to instruct one another.”

– Romans 15:14

Practically these groups should be comprised of 2-3 same gendered individuals who meet roughly every other week in order to:

- **Connect** relationally (about 10 minutes)
- **Apply** Scripture to life (about 30 minutes)
- **Pray** for and with one another (about 10 minutes)
- **Reach Out** to the world around you (about 10 minutes)

Of course, as these relationships deepen, it will also be natural for Disciple Partners to connect informally between gatherings, via phone, email and face to face. The goal of these connections is ongoing heart-level change and conformity to Jesus. This change happens through the process of putting off the old self and putting on Jesus Christ. We pray for God to grow a network of healthy multiplying partners so that York Alliance Church will grow in love for, dependence on, and likeness to Jesus.

What Will My DP Do?

The following is an overview to guide group meetings.

CONNECT AND PRAY | 10 minutes

After a brief greeting time, ask a heart-level question (such as one of the questions below) and allow a few minutes to respond. Fight against the temptation to remain in shallow conversation!

- Since our last discussion I've been praying for you in this way _____. How has that been going?
- What is God teaching you this week?
- What is a current joy/burden/desire in your life?
- How are things at home and with your family?

After connecting, take time to:

- **Remind each other** why you gather. (Romans 15:14, 2 Cor. 3:18)
- **Pray to God** asking Him to grow you in love for, and conformity to, Jesus as you open His word.

APPLY THE SCRIPTURE TO LIFE | 30 minutes

Discipleship Partners are designed to be structured around the regular reading of God's Word. Scripture not only tells us the truth about God, but invites us into relationship with Him as the One who has spoken these truths.

Each member of the group will commit to a specific personal reading plan. You may choose to read short passages or stories that allow you to soak in a particular truth, or you may choose longer sections of Scripture that show the big story of God, His ways, and His character. If you aren't sure where to start, York Alliance has several suggested reading plans each year. You can find them at www.yorkalliance.org on the "resources" and "spiritual practices" page.

Discipleship Partners can have the same reading plan or a different one for each member. This is because the purpose of your reading is not studying together, but accountability to the regular reading of the Word and allowing each of you to benefit from the truths that God is speaking to the others through His Word.

The primary point of reading Scripture is to know God as revealed in the Biblical story.

Scripture will teach us about ourselves (how we relate to God, what we treasure, and what our tendencies are). We want the truth about God and us to change us. We want God's Word to literally give shape to our lives.

This time of applying the Scripture to life should take two primary forms: Reflection and Confession/Repentance.

Reflection on the Word

The following are key questions that one member can ask another during this reflection period:

- What are you learning about God?
- What are you learning about yourself?
- Is there a specific idea or characteristic of God or humanity that stuck out to you in this reading?
- Where would you place yourself in the Biblical narrative that you read? Do you identify particularly with any of the characters?

Confession and Repentance

The following are key questions that one member can ask another during the confession period:

- Has this reading revealed to you any specific sins or areas in which you have fallen short?

- Are there lies about God that you have been believing? How does this tempt you toward sin?

Take time to talk to God, as well as one another, about these answers. According to 1 John 1:9, confession is essentially agreeing with God about our sin. If you don't talk with God in prayer, it's likely that these truths will only grow you in your knowledge. As you speak to God, you are not only agreeing with Him about your sin and His Truth, but becoming more like Him through your growing relationship with Him.

Following confession, here are some key questions that one member can ask another during the repentance period:

- What desires/actions do you need to put to death?
- What do you need to take up or pursue instead?

The goal is to turn away from sinful desires and toward the true God. The assumption is that repentance is a change in desire that leads to a change in outward behavior. Rather than a one-time event, turning from our sins back to the Gospel in faith is the continual path of the Christian life. Repentance is often pictured in the Bible as "killing" sin in us: put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you... (Colossians 3:5).

PRAY FOR AND WITH ONE ANOTHER | 10 minutes

A great way to talk to God is to pray through Scripture. As you pray to God for one another, it is a great opportunity to incorporate ideas from the passages you've read. Pray intentionally for one another in the areas God has revealed.

PRAY FOR A NON-CHRISTIAN FRIEND | 10 minutes

A key part of the Christian life is that God's work in us is never intended for us alone. He is always seeking to reach the world through us! (Acts 17:26-27) Who has God placed in your life for you to bless, pray for, and talk to about His love? Pray that God would expand your group by their presence!

How to get started

The only requirements for participation with a Discipleship Partner are (1) a hunger for Jesus and (2) a commitment to the partnership.

STARTING A GROUP

Choose a friend or two. Invite a same-gendered friend or two (maybe from your Community Group?) to start a group.

Set a regular time and place to meet. Plan for at least a one-hour meeting at least every other week. If desired, additional connections can happen as well.

Keep it simple. Your group should be no more than 2 or 3 people. When a fourth begins attending consistently, the group should become 2 groups of 2.

Make it reproducible. Share leadership responsibilities so that all of you are prepared to lead new groups as God makes that possible.

Make it missional. Disciples are called to be on mission. Be sure to pray for your non-Christian neighbors, friends, family, and co-workers during your meetings. Plan for, and actively seek to share your life and the Gospel with them.

If you aren't sure who to ask and/or would like to be connected with a Discipleship Partnership that's already meeting, contact the church office at info@yorkalliance.org. We would be glad to help you connect!

