

TRAINING LEADER GUIDE

2019 BELLEVUE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

WELCOME TO DAY ONE

Thank you for stepping up into the role of Training Leader for your discipleship community. What you do is essential to the flourishing of DC life. There's a phrase we love around here that says: *"God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called."* As the DC Leader, I believe that God is calling you to this role, and this field guide is intended to equip you to fulfill your calling.

DC RHYTHMS & DNA

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

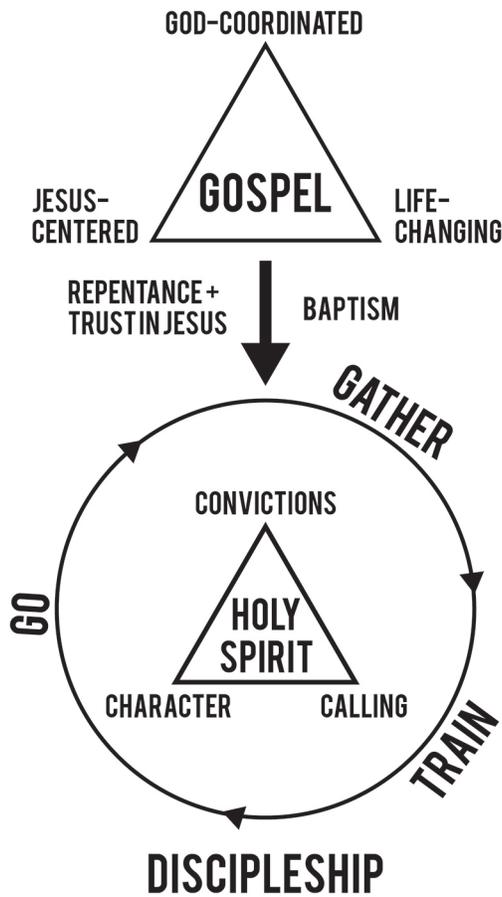
Matthew 28:18-20

Jesus commanded every church to *make disciples* wherever they are—whether that’s in Pittsburgh or Tokyo, in global cities or in the middle of the jungle. Before we can talk about how DCs work, the first thing we need to do is talk about what discipleship looks like at our church.

We define disciples as *ordinary people learning to live everyday life like Jesus*. After spending a few years studying what discipleship looked like in the gospels and by paying attention to the key elements of discipleship “success stories” in our own church, we’ve developed a strategy for making disciples right here in Pittsburgh—one simple enough to draw on a napkin.

EXERCISE

Over the next five minutes, I'm going to walk you through our church-wide discipleship strategy. *Feel free to take notes on the diagram.* When I finish, I want you to practice walking me through it—in five minutes or less!—by drawing it on a napkin and explaining it as you go



If that diagram is the skeleton of what discipleship looks like at our church, we've created a number of mechanisms to be the muscles that make discipleship move. DCs are one of the primary discipleship mechanisms at our church. If a disciple is an ordinary person learning to live everyday life like Jesus, DCs are *ordinary people learning to live everyday life like Jesus together*. That's it.

In response to the gospel and through the power of the Holy Spirit, each DC practices the same three rhythms that we just covered in our discipleship strategy:

- 1. DCs gather.** Each DC is committed to *gathering* together in someone's home weekly during each season for a meal followed by a time of training together—and meeting together in *at least* one other way throughout the season and off-season.
- 2. DCs train.** Each DC is committed to *training* together at each weekly gathering by discussing questions centered around the biblical text and sermon from the previous Sunday (as well as trying any suggested weekly practices), which are prepared each week by our question writing team. Training can also include prayer, worship, and other spiritual practices.
- 3. DCs go.** Each DC is committed to *going* together by serving one another and the neighborhood around the host in *at least* one ongoing or one-time way each season.

In addition to those three rhythms, every DC shares four strands of DNA:

- 1. DCs are for everyone.** In one phrase, *there's room for everyone at the table*. There's more than enough room for believers and unbelievers, couples and singles, babies and the elderly—and everyone in between. While it's easier to spend time with people in the same stage of life or faith as you, we believe that the healthiest communities form when people from different stages share the same table.

- 2. DCs share the work.** In one phrase, *we're all members of the crew*. Community is hard work, and the quickest way to burn out as a leader is to do all the work yourself. That's one of the reasons we share the work. Elton Trueblood, in the book he wrote about something very similar to DCs in 1947, writes, "If you want to make a difference, here is a clear way. Make all, within your society, members of the crew and permit no passengers."¹
- 3. DCs multiply.** In one phrase, *sending is better than splitting*. DCs multiply by sending and not by splitting. There's a difference. Splitting is reactive multiplication, and it's usually unhealthy. It often happens because a community grew too large or because there's a division within the community. Sending, on the other hand, is proactive multiplication, and it's usually a mark of health—because healthy things tend to grow and multiply. It's something your DC will do long before it *needs* to multiply.
- 4. DCs rest.** In one phrase, *communities that rest together stay together*. In Mark 6:31, Jesus told his disciples to "come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while" after an intense season of mission. If they didn't take time to rest, the "work" of ministry would have likely turned into something they dreaded instead of something they looked forward to. Even Jesus built seasons of rest into his life and ministry. Without real rest, the joy of ministry work turns into drudgery and toil. Rest, however, gives you fresh energy for life in community. This is why we take a break in the winter and summer.

¹Elton Trueblood, *Alternative to Futility* (New York: Harper, 1947), 74.

WHAT DOES A TRAINING LEADER DO?

Under the leadership of the DC Leader, the Training Leader is responsible for taking ownership of the training rhythm for each season of DC life. Without a Training Leader, it's easy for a DC to drift away from that discipleship rhythm.

As the Training Leader, you are responsible for:

- **Participating** in the planning session before the season starts and the review session after the season ends.
- **Planning** how your DC will organize the training portion of your weekly gathering. This will include sermon-based discussion questions (developed by a different team, which will be made available on Mondays at 12:00pm) and prayer—at a minimum.
- **Empowering** ordinary people to lead the DC through different parts of the training portion of the weekly gathering (e.g., prayer, worship, discussion leader, etc.).

SERMON-BASED DISCUSSIONS

With the exception of the first and second seasons of DC life where they'll be using the DC Kickstarter and running an Alpha Course, DCs will be using sermon-based discussion questions. We do this for two primary reasons:

- 1. It's how people learn.** It's proven that people learn best when they are given space to dive deeper into what they just learned and to practice what they're learning. Instead of just hearing a sermon on Sunday, they'll be able to discuss that same biblical text with their DC. This will give them space to ask questions they couldn't ask on Sunday. Lots of churches follow the same strategy because it's the most effective way to get something from our heads to our hearts to our hands.
- 2. It keeps the whole church on the same page.** Instead of one DC studying 1 Kings and another DC studying *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, all the DCs are studying the same biblical texts each week. This means that even people who aren't in the same DC will be able to have conversations—because they're literally on the same page of the Bible.

The questions will be available to download by Monday at 12:00pm. Most of the questions are derived from the biblical text itself, which means that even if someone missed the sermon they'll still benefit from the weekly discussion.

As a church, we encourage people to read the Bible with their head, heart, and hands, which we explore more in our Everyday Bible course. This means that, for the most part, each set of sermon discussion questions will follow the same basic format. By practicing this in community, you're teaching people how to read the Bible on their own as well.

- 1. Head: *Do I know what this means?*** These questions will focus on understanding the text by diving into it and figuring out what it means. As much as possible, we want people to avoid simply saying, "I think it means..." and encouraging people to show us where they see that in the weekly text itself.
- 2. Heart: *Do believe what I know?*** These questions will focus on the inside. They will be more personal in nature and will give people an opportunity to share where they resist what the Bible is saying, where they want to believe what it's saying, where they feel God meeting them in the text, and where they have personal experience with this particular subject or event. In the end, we're trying to work through any inner obstacles to living this out.
- 3. Hands: *Am I living what I believe?*** These questions will focus on application to everyday life. If we aren't living this out, it's just an interesting discussion that doesn't demand anything of us-- it doesn't require any skin in the game. These questions will be more practical in nature. On some weeks, there might be a suggested practice for individuals or for the whole community.

Familiarize yourself with the questions *before* your discussion. A prepared leader is far better equipped to lead a DC through these questions. As you're leading people through these questions, here are a few general tips for effective discussions:

- **The questions are not a checklist.** Your goal as a training leader is not *completion* but *transformation*. It's not about asking every question. Be listening to the Spirit as you're leading people through the questions. The structure is really only meant to make space for the Spirit to speak to people.

- **Silence is not the enemy.** If you don't leave time for silence, the only people who will ever speak are the external-processors who think out loud. Remember that people are thinking about these questions for the first time, but you've already had a chance to look at them. The Lord can work in silence.
- **Forbid the word interesting.** Interesting is a non-committal word. It's similar to a "like" on a social media post. Encourage people to say more. What are they actually feeling? What, in particular, is the text moving in them?

Can we do something instead of sermon-based discussions? Preferably, no. If you have something that keeps coming up, bring that issue to your coach, and that topic might instead be something we can develop a workshop at church around or even consider doing a series.

FIVE DISCUSSION PERSONALITIES

One of the realities of a discussion is that it involves many different personalities who are at different stages of faith. This means that you'll have people who say everything on their minds and people who say nothing at all. You'll have people who speak like everyone in the DC has been in church their whole lives (what's commonly called "Christian-ese") and people who aren't even sure what baptism is. You'll have people who share too much and people who don't share enough.

Here's how to handle five different discussion personalities:

1. The Theologian ("I'd like to discuss verbal plenary inspiration, substitutionary atonement, and the meaning of the underlying Greek word here.>"). This is the person who loves to go deep, really deep, into whatever it is we're studying—often at the expense of everyone else. They use language that unchurched people can't understand.

- ◇ Use the lasso—if necessary. You can say something like, "That sounds like more than we get into tonight. Let's lasso this conversation for now and talk more about it with anyone who is interested afterward."
- ◇ If it persists, consider meeting one-on-one with that person every so often to go deeper into their questions.

2. The Derailer ("Hey look! A squirrel..."). This is the person who tends to always lead the discussion off-topic. It could be a story that's only slightly relevant, a YouTube video he or she watched recently that is also only slightly relevant, or something else.

- ◇ Use the lasso (again)—if necessary. You can say something like, "It sounds like this is more than we get into tonight. Let's lasso this conversation for now." You can follow-up with individuals afterward.
- ◇ If it's an ongoing trend, have a one-on-one conversation with him or her. Assume that this person is not intending to be distracting.

3. The Silent (“...”). This is the person who almost never talks. No matter what. It could be a question about favorite colors. Nothing. That’s okay. It’s likely that this person is just an internal processor.

- ◇ Ask if it would be helpful if they had access to the questions beforehand—so that they have time to process.
- ◇ Ask them a direct question, instead of just to the whole group.

4. The Talker (“There’s just one more thing I want to say about that.” *5 minutes later* “Okay, this is the last thing.”). This is the person who responds to every question and often isn’t very quick in his or her answers. They leave very little time for other people to share. It’s likely that he or she is an external processor.

- ◇ You can say something like, “Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t shared yet.” This can at least create some space for other people to speak.
- ◇ If they have a lot to say, you might need to say something like, “Let’s stop there for a second and hear from someone else.”

5. The Over-Share (“I’m going through something right now, and I know it has nothing to do with this, but here I go anyways.”). Yes, sometimes it’s important to create space when a person starts opening up. Often, though, it’s the same person opening up—every single week—even if it has very little to do with the actual discussion. If you’re not attentive, it can be easy for your DC to become so-and-so’s personal weekly counseling session.

- ◇ Affirm the person—that you’ve heard and seen them. For many people like this, you’re the first community they’ve had in a long time where they felt safe to share.
- ◇ You can say something like, “That sounds like you’ve got a lot going on. Would someone be willing to meet up with him (or her) this week and talk more about that?” Or, you can ask someone specifically to meet up this week.

TIPS FOR WORSHIP & PRAYER

We encourage every DC to include prayer as part of training together, and some DCs choose to include worship as well—depending on the giftedness of people in their DC. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you include prayer and worship:

- **Make “prayer requests” part of the culture, not just one long discussion.** Often when people pray together, they start by asking, “What prayer requests do we have?” Usually, as a result, the group will spend 15 minutes sharing requests and just a few minutes praying. Instead, though, we encourage people to just start into prayer without sharing requests. Instead encourage your DC to discover prayer requests during dinner or throughout the week. Also, you can encourage people to simply pray their requests during prayer, and encourage everyone else to follow up on that request with more prayer.
- **Encourage people to keep prayers short.** It can be easy to slip into really lengthy prayers. Instead, encourage people to keep it short and invite them to pray multiple times throughout the time of prayer.
- **Do the *same* songs over and over for a season.** An obsession with novelty by a worship leader can keep people from getting into worship. If they are trying new songs every week, it’s impossible for people to know songs well enough that they can sing them from the heart. Also, do songs that are common and easy to sing, especially in a home setting. You might want to create print-outs of the lyrics of the most common songs at the beginning of the season.

THE SIX COMMITMENTS

A covenant is the key to withstanding conflict and crisis, which we are guaranteed to experience as a DC at some point. A covenant is a commitment made to one another before conflict or crisis arises. It is something we can hold one another to when things feel like they are going to fall apart. Like a marriage covenant, it is something we can look back to when we are in difficult seasons. As part of this covenant, we ask that you commit to six things:

1. We commit to resolving any conflicts quickly and prayerfully rather than running away from them—following the Scriptural pattern of prayer, one-on-one, then the whole team.
2. We commit to leaning into community during crisis or conflict rather than leaving community.
3. We commit to fidelity in our marriages and abstinence in our singleness.
4. We commit to both giving and receiving gentle correction when we or others are caught in a sinful habit while being careful to know the difference between personality quirks and sins.
5. We commit to having nothing to do with gossip or complaining about other leaders or our DC.
6. We commit to maintaining a personal rhythm of spiritual disciplines—remembering that a DC can only be as spiritually healthy as its leadership.

Do you think that you can commit to these six things?

CONGRATS!

You're now a Training Leader. Thanks for making time to going through this field guide. If you have any questions, don't be afraid to ask. We have a coach who can help us with anything we're struggling with. You're invited to our next seasonal planning session to help us create a roadmap for the next DC season.