



# Strategies for Discipleship

Dr. Aaron Wheeler • 9 Sessions



**Strategies for Discipleship**  
**Session One**  
**INTRODUCTION**

Notes for Session One:

Discussion:

- 1.) Discipleship is about answering the question, "What's next?" Talk together about a time when you've had to answer that question for someone in your life. What is your experience with discipleship? What's worked? What hasn't?
- 2.) Much of this introductory lesson is focused on the idea of spiritual mapping. Have you heard of this idea before? What do you think of it? How could it be helpful in the task of discipleship?
- 3.) Looking at the piece of the spiritual spectrum presented in this lesson, where do you think most Christians get stuck in their journey with Christ? Have you ever felt stuck in your walk with Christ?
- 4.) What are your biggest concerns when it comes to discipling someone else? What tensions do you notice within yourself?
- 5.) **ACTIVITY:** As a group, come up with a physical expression for each place on the spectrum. Act out what "join" or "share" would look like. Make it fun and have some laughs. Then use those expressions as a way to memorize each place on the spiritual spectrum. Act them out each time you get together.
- 6.) **PRAY:** Spend time naming people in your life who need help in furthering their relationship with Jesus. Pray for your interaction with them and for God to provide opportunities for you to encourage them on their next step in their spiritual journey.

**Strategies for Discipleship**  
**Session Two**  
**JOIN**

Notes for Session Two:

Discussion:

- 1.) One of the key ideas in JOIN is that discipleship isn't about stopping what we do to "teach" someone to be a follower of Jesus, but instead asking them to join along in what you already do as his follower. How does that idea land with you? How might it be different from how discipleship has traditionally been done?
- 2.) What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about asking someone to join in your walk with Christ? What is an area of strength you feel you have to offer someone else?
- 3.) The JOIN stage is a season of dependence. When you were first starting out in your discipleship, who did you depend on most? What impact did this person have on your early relationship with Jesus? What is the biggest lesson you learned from them?
- 4.) In this lesson, the specific area focused on is joining in the church. The first basic pieces were to Attend, Connect, Give, and Serve. How are you doing in these foundational pieces? Where do you need to grow?
- 5.) Spend some time going around the group and saying what you think your spiritual gifts might be. It's okay if you're new to the idea and might not have a handle on what they are. Talk about some ways you've been able to use your spiritual gifts to bless the church.
- 6.) PRAY: Spend some time together sharing about who you need to ask to join you in your walk with Christ. What would this invitation to join look like? Then pray that God would give you courage to invite others in the journey.

**Strategies for Discipleship**  
**Session Three**  
**DO**

Notes for Session Three:

Discussion:

- 1.) The DO stage is a season of independence, in contrast to the dependence of the JOIN stage. Where have you seen this happen in your own spiritual life? What is one area where you used to depend on others but are now capable of doing on your own?
- 2.) A critique sometimes heard in churches is "I'm not being fed." How does this idea factor into the shift from JOIN to DO? What responsibility does the church have to help people move from dependence to independence?
- 3.) The focus of this session was on the role of spiritual rhythms in our journey with Christ. What did you think of the "core four" presented here? What would you add or subtract from your own list of the primary rhythms of the spiritual life?
- 4.) Of all of the spiritual disciplines, which is your favorite? What is a new one you could try to add to your habits?
- 5.) Describe how the shift from JOIN to DO has been a part of your spiritual rhythm. How did someone play a role in helping you develop a spiritual habit?
- 6.) PRAY: Spend some time together sharing about an area of your spiritual life where you need to grow from dependence to independence. Where have you been relying for too long on others to provide something that you need to learn to do for yourself? Pray for one another to experience strength and growth in the journey with Christ.

**Strategies for Discipleship**  
**Session Four**  
**SHARE**

Notes for Session Four:

Discussion:

- 1.) This lesson wrapped up the apprenticeship section as a model for discipleship. What did you think of this idea as a model? How might it differ from some other discipleship models or strategies you've encountered before?
- 2.) The SHARE stage is based on output and production in the Christian life. What are some of the things you expect to see in someone who's producing a genuine faith? Besides the list of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5, what are specific areas where Christians will bear fruit?
- 3.) A significant focus in this lesson was on the strategy of multiplication in ministry. How is this model different from addition? How does this model apply to the group you are in right now? What might change in your long-term strategy if this group looked to multiply itself for the benefit of others?
- 4.) **ACTIVITY:** While the JOIN-DO-SHARE model can be applied generally, it also applies to specific areas of our Christian life. Individually, create a list of areas where you are in each stage of your journey. Where are you joining, where are you doing, and where are you sharing? Then share your lists with one another. What do you notice? And what does this say about ways your group could be encouraging one another in your walk with Christ?
- 5.) **CASE STUDY** - You may remember the Case Studies of Jim, Rick, and Susan from the series on evangelism. Let's take one more look at their stories for our strategies of discipleship.  
Read over the three case studies below, then answer these questions:

- 1.) What are the greatest discipleship needs for each person?
- 2.) What practical things would you do to help each person come closer to Christ?

### **JIM**

Jim has experienced significant growth in his relationship with Christ. He and his wife formally made a commitment to follow Jesus two years ago and have devoted themselves to growing in spiritual disciplines and discovering their spiritual gifts. They went from joining a small group to leading one, and have begun to ask bigger questions about what God is calling them to do next. While Jim loves the opportunities he has as a mechanic to show God's love to the community, he's wondering if God is calling him to another place to serve.

### **RICK**

Praise God for the change in Rick's life! Several months ago, while on a camping trip, Rick asked some serious questions about what it means to follow Jesus, and with the group of other men on the trip, he experienced a deep and emotional time of repentance, ultimately resulting in a decision to follow Jesus. Since then, he has begun to attend church, has been baptized, and is building the foundational blocks of faith. He mainly finds his connection through the men's ministry at the church. An area of concern that you've noticed is the way he handles his emotions. While he continues to be an outgoing guy, he has had a couple of instances of angry outbursts at others during an argument. Also, when asked if he would be available to serve in the children's ministry, he brushed off the question by saying that he's not into "that stupid kids' stuff."

### **SUSAN**

Susan has been on a long road. Her relationship with her mother continues to be difficult. For a season, Susan stepped away from regular engagement out of respect for her mother's feelings, but eventually decided to come back to church and her small group because she believed that's what God wanted her to do. This ultimately resulted in Susan recommitting her life to Jesus about a year ago. Since then she's been faithfully attending and learning about what it means to be a Christian. Two weeks ago, during a small group meeting, she confessed that she's been involved in a sexual relationship for several weeks with a man from work. She feels great shame and embarrassment for her sin and seeks to change.

- 6.) Pray: Spend some time praying that God will show each of you areas where you could be SHARING with others in your life the good things God has done for you.

**Strategies for Discipleship**  
**Session Five**  
**THE WALL**

Notes for Session Five:

Discussion:

- 1.) This lesson is pretty heavy. Take some time at the beginning or after the video, simply checking in with each other on how you all are feeling. What do you notice within yourself? What parts of the session stood out to you the most?
- 2.) Has anyone in this group had a “wall” experience before? Spend some time sharing together about what this season may be like. How did it begin? What was your reaction to it? If you have completed the experience, what helped you get through it?
- 3.) What do you think the purpose of the wall is? Why does God lead us to and through it?
- 4.) What are some of the mistaken reactions we make at the wall? Why do these not work?
- 5.) What was your reaction to examining the three biblical examples of God leading his people into wilderness experiences? What does that say about God’s purpose for us?
- 6.) PRAY: Spend some time praying for one another and the wall experiences you may be sharing. Pray also for anyone in your lives who needs encouragement in a difficult season.

*NOTE: Some may like additional reading on the idea of “The Wall.” Recommended resources would include the chapter “Journey Through the Wall” from Richard Villodas’ book Emotionally Healthy Spirituality and the chapter “The Wall” from Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich’s book The Critical Journey.*

**Strategies for Discipleship**  
**Session Six**  
**BREAKING IN**

Notes for Session Six:

Discussion:

- 1.) "Breaking in" describes a new inward focus on what has happened within us as we look to be transformed into Christ. Oftentimes, this happens because the pain of our wall experience has us re-thinking our motivations to know and serve God. For those who resonate with this idea, spend some time sharing with one another what this season has been like for you.
- 2.) The end of this season should result in a renewed love for God and for others. How does that idea sit with you? What do you notice within yourself as you consider a season of grief resulting in a greater and deeper sense of God's love?
- 3.) **ACTIVITY:** This lesson took a special focus on the practice of lament. Lamenting is a skill that is best mastered before it is needed, so your group should spend some time practicing it even if everyone doesn't necessarily feel the need for it right now. There are three movements to lament, based on the Psalms and specifically Psalm 13. The three movements are:
  - a.) Complain - honestly open up to God about the pain you are feeling
  - b.) Petition - ask God for what you want and remind him of his promises
  - c.) Resolution - return to what you know is true about God and his love for youSpend some time in your group allowing each person to craft a short lament. Give space for this to happen over a period of at least 15 minutes. Then spend some time debriefing this experience with each other. You could ask:
  - 1.) What was that like for you? Have you done anything like this before?
  - 2.) Did you notice any resistance in any of the three movements?
  - 3.) What do you think might happen if you made this a regular practice in your life?
- 4.) **PRAY:** Spend some time praying for the inward journey as you learn to grieve with God in your pain.

**Strategies for Discipleship**  
**Session Seven**  
**BREAKING OUT**

Notes for Session Seven:

Discussion:

- 1.) “Breaking out” means a shift in focus from ourselves to others. In some ways, it can be considered an overflow of the love of God within us to others, as a cup filled to the top will spill onto everything around it. How does this idea sound to you? How might this season have similarities and differences to the SHARE stage from earlier?
- 2.) The previous stage was considered more vertical, whereas this stage is more horizontal. Why are both necessary? How does one relate to the other?
- 3.) Share about a time when God taught you a lesson that you then were able to use to encourage someone else in your life.
- 4.) This season is focused on doing good work not to EARN God’s love, but BECAUSE of God’s love for us. What is the difference? How would this shift change the way that we serve him?
- 5.) **ACTIVITY:** Focus in this lesson was given to personal retreats. They can be done individually or in a group. Has anyone in the group done a personal retreat before? Where did they go and what did they do? Spend some time working through the logistics of what a retreat would look like. Google to see if there are any retreat centers near you. You might also want to read over the retreat guides [available at this site](#).
- 6.) **PRAY:** Spend some time praying for one another as you consider what He’s doing inside you that will result in what He does outside of you.

**Strategies for Discipleship**  
**Session Eight**  
**THE LIFE OF LOVE**

Notes for Session Eight:

Discussion:

- 1.) This final season on the spiritual spectrum can be a bit controversial. Some would argue that this level of spiritual achievement isn't realistic and therefore shouldn't be included when looking at discipleship. Others argue that it is achievable in the Christian life, and at worst is a good goal to shoot for even if you can't reach it. What about you? What do you think about "the life of love" where union with Christ reaches its fullness?
- 2.) Two characteristics of a life of love are surrender and fearlessness. How have you experienced these things in your own journey with Christ? What has he helped you no longer fear and no longer need to control? What about on the other side? Where is he helping you in your fear and in your need to control?
- 3.) How do you hear Paul's phrasing of a "love that surpasses knowledge" (Eph 3:19)? What resistances or joys do you experience in thinking about a love that is more than we can know or understand?
- 4.) **ACTIVITY: Real Case Studies**  
Over these courses, we have done case studies as a way to consider how we would play a role in helping someone know Jesus more and deeper. For the final case study, let's make it concrete. Pick a partner in the group, and pair off together where you can tell each other your testimony - your story of what it's been like as a follower of Jesus. Then answer the following questions:
  - A.) What do you think are this person's greatest discipleship needs?
  - B.) What practical things would you do to help this person come closer to Christ?Afterward, spend some time debriefing this experience. What was it like to consider someone's real-life situation in this manner? What were you able to share with them that seemed helpful? What would it change to think of others like this?
- 5.) **PRAY: Pray together about helping one another reach fullness in Christ (Eph 3:19). Ask the Spirit to inspire your group with ways to encourage a deeper and fuller walk with Jesus.**

**Strategies for Discipleship**  
**Session Nine**  
**CONCLUSION**

Notes for Session Nine:

Discussion:

- 1.) As you look back at the discipleship side of the spiritual spectrum, what stands out the most? Which place was the most meaningful to you? Which place was the most confusing?
- 2.) If you had to place yourself somewhere on the spectrum, where would it be? What made you come to that decision? What about the important people in your life? Where would you place them?
- 3.) What do you think is the next step for you? What can this group do to help you and the others in the group move to their next place?
- 4.) Where do you think your church can grow in helping people move forward in their faith? What do you think are your church's strengths and weaknesses regarding discipleship? What encouragement would you give to your local body?
- 5.) Spend some time together reading John 15:1-17. What stirs in you as you read these words of Jesus? What do you think he might be challenging you and this group to do?
- 6.) PRAY: Pray together that God's power would unite your group and your church to live in His fullness, knowing the height and depth of his complete love.

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