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CHURCH EQUIPPING GROUP

Supporting 1-2-1 Discipleship

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Introduction

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” – Matthew 28:18-20

Discipleship is the process of making and shaping disciples, or followers, of Jesus Christ. This starts with evangelism but continues in the ongoing teaching and shepherding that takes place in the life of the Church. At the end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gives a clear command: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations." Within the context of Matthew's Gospel, discipleship seems to mean more than doctrinal teaching or simple information transfer.

When Jesus told his disciples to make disciples, they would have thought to do exactly what Jesus had done with them – intentionally and relationally invest, on an ongoing basis, in the lives of others to nurture fellow followers of Christ.



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The process of disciple making in Scripture looks less like a university classroom and more like Deuteronomy 6, teaching others how to observe the commands of Christ as you sit, walk, lie down and rise up. It is slow, selfless and highly relational. Throughout the Gospels we see Jesus invest himself in his disciples.

They studied Jesus' whole life, learning how to love like he loved, think like he thought, live like he lived, teach like he taught and serve like he served. 1-2-1 Discipleship seeks to emulate this biblical model by empowering the local church to live out Jesus' command to make disciples.

First Principles to always remember

1. Discipleship

A 1-2-1 is a support relationship between two people who are disciples of Jesus Christ. The purpose of 1-2-1 support is to learn and grow together, to explore ways to serve, to love and protect each other and to help bear more fruit in our lives.

2. Friendship

At the heart of 1-2-1 support is a relationship between friends. Two people in a 1-2-1 are on a journey together. Support is given and received through a growing bond of love, friendship and fellowship in Jesus.

3. Transformation

1-2-1s seek to take part in the work of the Holy Spirit described in 2 Corinthians 3:18, which transforms us into the image of God from one degree of glory to another. The goal is not information transfer alone, but transformation into Christlikeness.

4. Bible

1-2-1s will aim to have reading and talking about the Bible as a central part of their friendship.

5. Prayer

1-2-1s will pray with each other and for each other.

6. Questions

1-2-1s are a good place for asking questions: about ourselves, about life and about faith. None of us will have all the answers, but a 1-2-1 is a safe place to ask and a safe place to say if you don't know.

7. Commitment

1-2-1s will involve commitment. Frequency of meetings will vary among different people; but at the heart of a 1-2-1 is a commitment to regularly share our time, to support each other and to be accountable to one another.

8. Trust

At the heart of a 1-2-1 is trust. All 1-2-1s require a commitment to appropriate confidentiality.

Details and topics to think about

1. How to establish 1-2-1 Discipleship

All our efforts to encourage and support discipleship through 1-2-1 relationships must be underpinned by love for those in our pastoral care and prayerful dependence on God. Many discipleship relationships are already naturally active and thriving in your congregation. However, many people will need an invitation into a more formal process of discipleship.

Questions to Ask

When establishing a 1-2-1 in your congregation, please discuss the following questions:

- What natural relationships already exist? How can you move them towards a Christ-centred discipleship relationship?
- Thinking of the individual seeking or requiring to be discipled, what kind of help do you feel they need?
- Who do you feel would be an appropriate disciple maker for them?
- Do you think the potential disciple maker would be realistically able to take up this role?
- How long should the support last and how regular do you feel it should be?
- Who will be responsible for checking how the 1-2-1 is going?

Making Appropriate Pairings

In establishing 1-2-1 Support, it is important to recognise that people's needs and circumstances can vary greatly. For example:

- A new Christian will be helped by learning how to read the Bible and apply it, and by praying with a more experienced Christian
- A first-year student may be helped to face the challenges and opportunities of living faithfully at university by meeting and praying with an older student or graduate who has already faithfully navigated some of these things
- Two mothers of young children may help each other by meeting to share the questions they face, looking for help in the scriptures and praying together

Understanding each need should guide the choice of pairings and advice about the ‘content’ of this ministry. There is not one template that can be applied every time. New pairings are more likely to work well if thought about carefully and prayerfully.

When choosing someone to fill the disciple-maker role, the following should be considered:

- The disciple maker should be someone who is an example of what it means to love the Lord and follow him in their own life. They must love God's word, have some knowledge of it and know where to look for help when they need it. They must demonstrate humility and a willingness to say, 'I don't know, but I can try to find out.'
- Suitability is more important than availability. Personality clashes arise in the church as well as in the world. In love, we can learn to manage them; but the place for this is not in one-to-one ministry between the two personalities. We need to be sensitive to this when considering pairings.

- Usually, before approaching someone to be a disciple maker, the disciple's agreement should be asked. Occasionally it will happen that they express unease which could be awkward to handle if the disciple maker had already been approached.
- Some may seek one-to-one support because they have underlying emotional needs that are the primary reason for their request. We need to be alert to this possibility and doubly careful how we pair them and how we support the person paired with them. There may be occasions where counselling or other professional help is needed.
- Appropriate training about knowing limitations is vital. Disciple makers should have a clear understanding of church policies on when to seek outside help, such as in instances of abuse. A clear reporting structure should be in place.

2. Guidelines for 1-2-1 Discipleship

Every discipleship relationship will vary according to the personalities, backgrounds, interests and circumstances of the persons involved. Yet one may approach this role with either preexisting assumptions or perhaps no assumptions at all. Therefore, if you are being asked to disciple another person on a one-to-one basis it will be helpful to know broadly what is expected of you.

What follows are practical implications derived from our first principles for 1-2-1 support. With each principle a general expectation is given, along with a few points and questions designed to help you, the supporter, think about how best you might implement it.

1. Discipleship: be helpfully clear about the purpose of meeting.

- How, from the outset, might you share expectations and discover needs?
- Is there a resource or tool that could be helpful to look at together? (See 1-2-1 Resources.)
- How will you both, from time to time, evaluate the relationship in light of this purpose? (e.g., give the person discipled the opportunity to feed back)

2. Friendship: create a “space” where a genuine friendship is able to grow.

- At an early stage, consider how you can have fun together. Having fun builds intimacy, which leads to an authentic relationship.



- Is there a shared interest you can both discuss or even enjoy together? (e.g., sport/films)
- What can you do or ask that helps you get to know each other? (Resources has some 'helps'.)
- Have you enough time to be relaxed together as well as intentional? (at least 45mins-1hr)
- Where is a good place to meet that is conducive to honest conversation? (e.g., over coffee/a meal)
- How can you share life or support each other outside of 1-2-1 meetings?
- Are you able, honestly, to share your own experiences - as far as that's helpful and appropriate?

3. Transformation: consider how to live out the Word of God together.

- Recognising that spiritual transformation is primarily a work of the Holy Spirit, spend appropriate time praying for God to be at work in your relationship.
- What aspects of your life can you invite them into? What would it look like to teach them as you sit, walk, lie down, and rise up (Deut. 6:7)?
- How can you live out your relationship with God in front of your disciple? (serving in the church together, sharing the gospel together, etc.)
- What would it look like to engage their whole person – heart, mind, body, and spirit?

4. Bible: encourage personal discussion and reflection on the Scriptures.

- Does this person know how to read and listen to God's word on a daily basis? How will you bring this up? (See Resources.)
- Ask one another how the Bible addresses the life issues with which you are grappling.
- Is it appropriate to suggest going through a study together? (See Resources.)
- Is there a simple method or principle you can share and practice together? (See Resources.)

5. Prayer: pray regularly for the other person. You should also seek to encourage a growing trust in God in prayer. When appropriate, pray with one another.

- What will help you remember to pray regularly for this person? (App/journal)
- What key growth needs do you want to pray for?
- Does this person know how to pray? How will you bring this up?
- Is there a simple method or principle you can share and practice together? (See Resources.)
- Is it appropriate at this stage to pray when you meet? (Ask permission first.)
- How will you keep track of prayer requests and celebrate when God answers?

6. Questions: ask questions and make it a safe place for them to ask any question.

- What do you really want to know about the other person?
- How can you model being a humble learner? Your honesty will often lead to theirs.
- How can you make it as easy as possible for questions to be asked?
- Is there a resource you can use to stimulate reflection and questions? (See Resources.)

7. Commitment: take initiative in ensuring regular meetings take place.

- How regularly would be good to meet? What is realistic? (weekly/fortnightly/monthly)
- How long would be good for your meetings to last? (e.g., 1hr-1hr ½)
- Can you create a 'predictable pattern'? (e.g., Mondays, fortnightly, 7pm at a Cafe)
- What regular features do you want your times to have? (e.g., sharing, reading Scripture, prayer)

8.Trust: the other person can fully rely on you not to pass on what they have shared.

- Make a solemn commitment with yourself to neither repeat nor allude to personal information shared by the other person. Ask the Lord to put a guard over your tongue!
- Confidentiality must be respected in all circumstances except those in which there is a significant risk to someone's health or safety.
- If appropriate, disciples and disciple makers are both encouraged to raise any concerns directly with the local leadership.

Resources to make use of

In order to help encourage 1-2-1 Support, the resources that follow may be helpful.

Shared Time

One of the most significant resources you can bring to any 1-2-1 relationship is yourself and your life. Your friendship as a disciple who daily seeks to follow Jesus Christ is a blessing to the person you are discipling. For the one being discipled, to have someone alongside who, as they follow Jesus, shares learning and experience and real life, is one of the most powerful vehicles for growth as disciples. There is regular caring, asking, praying, encouraging and challenging. And of course, it is what Jesus did! This is the best context within which to use any other resource.

In any relationship, it takes time to get to know one another. The person in front of you has been shaped by many factors – nationality, family, friends, school, work, life events, relationships etc. It is important to take time to ask questions and listen well, in order to get to know and understand them as a unique individual. To help this process, here are some exercises that may be helpful:

Time-line Tool

This is a simple exercise which involves both of you drawing a time-line of your lives, from birth to present day, which notes the ups and downs and all significant moments to date. Once it is written down, you can take turns to chat through your timelines. Be unhurried and ready to ask questions.

Faith Story

What is the background story of the person you are discipling? How did they come to faith? How did they come to your church? Listen to their story and be ready to share your own. Listen out for key characters or events that you might want to find out more about. Later, on your own, reflect on their faith story and think about whether there are areas or issues that you might want to ask or talk about more. It would be appropriate to record significant things in a journal.

Bible Study Aids

Bible study aids are helpful for disciples at all stages, but they are especially good for new Christians. The follow resources may be helpful:

ESV Bible Study Journals

These are very simple booklets where a book of the Bible is set out on one side of the booklet and on the opposite page is space to write notes. This is a very helpful tool for making notes together or for jotting down questions while reading the Bible.

Good Book Company

The Good Book Company provide several helpful aids for Bible Study. Some of these are commentaries (similar to the Bible Speaks Today) and there are booklets with Bible Study questions. These booklets are often used in Bible Study groups but they are equally suitable for using in a 1-2-1. They also produce specific One2One Bible reading guides.

The Word One to One

This is a booklet designed for two people to read through the gospel of John together. It provides a very simple and accessible format for studying John's Gospel together.

Bible Speaks Today

This is a series of commentaries on books of the Bible or on key biblical themes. They are very accessible and easy to read and provide a very helpful guide into more in-depth study. They also contain study questions that provoke thought and discussion.

Discovery Bible Study

This is a simple Bible study guide that can be used with any passage of Scripture. It is designed with non-believers and new Christians in mind in order to facilitate discussion about the Bible.

Christian Books

Reading books together can also be very helpful for 1-2-1s. There are many good books to choose from. The following books are some suggestions for reading together:

Theology

A Faith to Live By by Donald Macleod (320 pages)

This is a practical and approachable examination of the doctrines of the Christian faith. It helps make complex subjects simple and understandable, covering justification, baptism, the Trinity and everything in between.

Knowing God by J.I. Packer (352 pages)

Packer's classic is built on the foundation that to love someone, you must know them. He beautifully explores how we can know God, what God is like, and why that matters for us today.

The Cross of Christ by John Stott (460 pages)

A classic and thorough examination of why Jesus had to die and what the cross means for us today. It is clear, understandable and very readable. Although it is fairly long, it is well worth it!

Delighting in the Trinity, by Michael Reeves (135 pages)

Reeves shows how the fact that God is Trinity has profound implications for every aspect of our faith. He helps make this sometimes-difficult doctrine come alive, encouraging us to deeper prayer and worship.

Culture

The God Who Is There by Francis Schaeffer (216 pages)

One of the 20th Century's most compelling apologists takes a good look at science, philosophy, art and their intersection with the God revealed in the Bible. This book is immensely helpful for understanding where today's culture and society has come from and it gives brilliant advice to help us speak about the good news of Jesus to those around us.

Better Story by Glynn Harrison (192 pages)

Harris challenges us to ask ourselves hard questions about sexuality: what if we faced up to our sub-Christian culture of shame, re-imagined what it means to be made in the image of God, and discovered human flourishing by living in the light of God's good design?

Plugged In by Dan Strange (160 pages)

A practical book that helps us, as consumers of culture (through media, technology, etc.), to thoughtfully engage with the world around us in a joy-filled and discerning manner. This book shows where the world is good, where the world is broken and why the gospel is best of all.

Counterfeit Gods by Timothy Keller (240 pages)

Keller uses stories from the Bible to show that idolatry, both the obvious idol-worshipping and the more subtle elevation of a good thing to an ultimate thing, is more relevant to our spiritual lives today than ever before — and what to do about it.

Apologetics

Confronting Christianity by Rebecca McLaughlin
(240 pages)

A thoughtful look at how suffering, human sexuality, science and more are all, at their deepest level, signposts which point us toward God, rather than obstacles that should keep anyone from faith in Jesus.

The Reason for God by Timothy Keller (320 pages)

Keller uses literature, philosophy, real-life conversations and reasoning to explain how faith in a Christian God is a soundly rational belief, held by thoughtful people of intellectual integrity with a deep compassion for those who truly want to know the truth.

Making Sense of God by Timothy Keller (336 pages)

Keller shines a light on the profound value and importance of Christianity in our lives as it bears on meaning, satisfaction, freedom, hope, identity and justice. He aims to disarm the sceptic and edify the believer.

Evangelism

Honest Evangelism by Rico Tice (112 pages)

Short, clear, realistic and humorous, this book will challenge you to be honest in your conversations about Jesus, help you to know how to talk about him, and thrill you that God can and will use ordinary people to change eternal destinies.

The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations by Mary Schaller and John Crilly (288 pages)

Schaller and Crilly draw directly from the life and ministry of Jesus to provide us with simple steps to build relationships with people who believe differently, through listening and discovering what's really important to them.

Bible

God's Big Picture: A Bible Overview by Vaughan Roberts (176 pages)

Roberts shows how all the books and themes and genres of the Bible weave together into one beautiful story and equips us to better understand not only the Bible, but the very heart of God. A very easy book to read, it gives a brilliant explanation of how the whole Bible fits together.

Can we Trust the Gospels? by Peter J Williams (160 pages)

A clarifying case for the historic reliability of the four Gospels which examines biblical and historical evidence, how the Gospels have been handed down and preserved through the centuries, and more. This would be a good book to read if someone has questions about whether the gospels are accurate or not.

Prayer

Prayer, a Biblical Perspective by Eric J Alexander
(101 pages)

This book is very encouraging and helpful. Prayer is something that everyone finds hard at times. This book helps remind us that prayer is simple, crucial and an amazing privilege.

A Call to Spiritual Reformation by D. A. Carson (230 pages)

This book examines the prayers of Paul. It gives a call for believers to resist superficiality and instead focus on having a deeper commitment to God in our lives.

Prayer by Timothy Keller (336 pages)

Keller gives a clear and biblical account of what prayer actually is and helps us learn how to pray and to continue deeper in prayer, with detailed and practical suggestions to make it a feasible daily reality.

Christian Life

Devoted to God: Blueprints for Sanctification by
Sinclair B Ferguson (296 pages)

A “blueprint for sanctification” — this book is an orderly exposition of New Testament passages on holiness, building a strong and reliable framework for practical Christian living. A great help for thinking about how being a Christian should shape our daily lives.

Holiness by J C Ryle (288 pages)

In this classic book Ryle, a 19th Century Bishop of Liverpool, strips away much of the man-made misrepresentations of holiness that we can easily fall into. Instead, he unfolds the true beauty of what it means to be holy, just as God is holy.

Women of the Word by Jen Wilkin (192 pages)

Offering a clear and concise plan to help women go deeper in their study of Scripture, this book will equip you to engage God's Word in a way that will help you understand the Bible more and be better prepared to teach it to others.

Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster (300 pages)

Foster helpfully explores the 'classic disciplines' of Christian faith: inward disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting and study; outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission and service; and corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance and celebration.

The Life You've Always Wanted by John Ortberg (272 pages)

Ortberg looks at the spiritual disciplines in a helpful, challenging and practical manner.

Outcomes to aim for

- Ensure that 1-2-1 Discipleship is regularly discussed by your Kirk Session
- Identify people who may be suitable as disciple makers
- Provide training at a local level
- Offer opportunities for 1-2-1 support
- Ensure that all new members are given 1-2-1 discipleship
- Create a church environment where everyone is involved in discipleship relationships

Next steps to take

For church leaders:

- Discuss a plan for implementing 1-2-1 Discipleship
 - Who will be responsible for 1-2-1 Discipleship?
 - How will you identify suitable disciples and disciple makers?
 - How will you check in on discipleship relationships?
 - How will your church facilitate an ongoing culture of discipleship?
- Identify key leaders to begin modelling 1-2-1 Discipleship and to share their experience
- Identify and provide appropriate resources for training

For church members:

- Pray – about how you can be involved in 1-2-1 Discipleship
- Look – who could you begin discipling? Or who would you like to ask to disciple you?
- Ask – take the first step and ask someone to meet about 1-2-1 Discipleship