



# Developing Devoted Disciples Participant Guide



The purpose of this module is to:

**teach the discipler how to address the needs of a new believer within the first 72 hours after his or her decision for Christ.**

Objectives:

- **Articulate the biblical basis for follow-up after conversion**
- **Identify the possible concerns and needs of the new believer**
- **Establish a framework for discipling which is relational**
- **Move beyond the problems of discipling to developing relationships**

## LECTURE

### The Feelings of New Believers

New believers experience a variety of \_\_\_\_\_. Some are positive, some are negative. Some are caused by internal conflicts and assumptions. Some emotions are triggered by pressures.

### Building Relationships

Friendship is the starting point for Christian growth and assisting new believers with their emotions. We have a responsibility to \_\_\_\_\_ new relationships. For some Christians, making contacts may be new territory and scary. Remember, Jesus intentionally sought the healed man. We have an opportunity to be like Christ.

- The first contact should be a positive memory.
- Make your first contact in person or by phone.
- Remember who you represent. Show an appropriate level of care and concern.
- Schedule a time to get together.
- Find a time and location where conversation can progress without significant interruption.
- Respecting a person's time is extremely important.

Conversation starters (*see asterisk below for ideas*) are a way to begin the relationship and determine the best methods for continuing the conversation.

Take time to get to know something about the person and his/her background and current situation.

Open-ended questions\* are essential to good conversation. Here are some sample questions:

- Tell me about your job. What do you like about it? What in your job is satisfying?
- What does the perfect day off look like for you?
- What was your family like growing up?
- What is your life motto?

Be open to acknowledge common \_\_\_\_\_.

## Defining Needs

Learning about the needs of new believers may come naturally from initial conversations, but disciplers must be intentional about expressing concern for new believers and expressing a \_\_\_\_\_ to help them. A desire to help models the love and \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ. This also draws them to the body of Christ. Look for statements which indicate that new believers realize a change in their actions, \_\_\_\_\_ or perspective. It may be necessary to ask questions such as: "In the last few days what has been the most significant moment in your spiritual life?" How has that moment changed your perspective?"

In assessing their spiritual needs, we cannot neglect other physical and \_\_\_\_\_ needs. Some new believers will be in \_\_\_\_\_ and harmful circumstances. We should determine what other types of assistance they may need.

## Encouragement and Affirmation

New believers need \_\_\_\_\_ that many of the feelings, fears and concerns they may experience are natural.

An important element of assuring new believers is to encourage the \_\_\_\_\_ they are not alone. They have become part of the family of God.

Remind them they can rely on the resources available to them. Help them see how important the following things are:

- Bible Study
- Prayer
- Fellowship with other believers
- Sunday School/Small Group
- Worship

## SMALL GROUP

Three case studies are available below for your small groups. Upon reading the case studies, determine the needs of Judy, Mark, and Keith. Answer the question: how can we best help these new converts?

### JUDY

Judy is a divorced single in her early 30s. She grew up in a family that had a Pentecostal church background. When Judy was a young child, her family left the church with some deep wounds and never attended again. Judy has spent much of her life searching for spiritual truth and been disappointed with her lack of certainty regarding spiritual things.

Judy's sister invited her to attend church. Judy experienced heartfelt worship, genuine hospitality, and messages she could apply to her life. After attending church for six months Judy participated in a beginners' Bible study. After the second study, the small group leader shared the gospel message with Judy and invited her to begin a relationship with Christ. Judy responded positively and asked Jesus to become the leader of her life.

Judy experiences great joy and excitement as a result of her decision. She feels as if she found what she had always been seeking. Judy has many questions which concern her. "What is she supposed to do now?" "Is she really forgiven?" "Does she have to make amends for the wrongs she has done?" Many of her questions about the next steps had to do with the baggage she carried for most of her life regarding the negative church experience her family had when Judy was a young child.

Judy is also living with a man to whom she is not married. She feels as if she is "in love" with him. They recently became engaged. Judy's fiancé does not attend church with her and she isn't sure he approves of her recent life changes.

How should the church respond to Judy's spiritual needs as a new believer? What about her relationship with her fiancé?

## **MARK**

Mark grew up in the Catholic Church until his parents got divorced. Mark never attended church again after his parents' divorce. Mark married young. He and his wife began a family early in their marriage. They struggled in their marriage relationship. They were often separated and many times considered divorce. Mark's search for God began when his wife was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer.

Mark's sister and brother-in-law recently "found" God and began to share with Mark what happened in their lives. Mark visited his sister's church and began meeting with the pastor shortly thereafter. Mark struggled with his wife's condition and wondered where God was and what role God plays in life and death. Mark and his wife accepted Christ as their Savior.

Mark testified he felt peace as a result of his decision. Mark was still facing a great deal of pain and confusion. "Could God heal his wife?" "Would God heal her?" "What would life be like without his wife and with the sole responsibility for his three small children?" Mark didn't know anyone in the church except for his sister's family and the pastor.

Mark is now a widower in his late 20s with three small children. What does Mark "need?" How does the church respond to a new believer who is asking, "Where is God in all of this pain and suffering?"

## **KEITH**

Keith is in his 40s. He is married for the second time and has two young children and two grown children from his previous marriage. Keith grew up in the church as a child. Keith's pastor portrayed God as an angry God, always displeased with our sinful lives. Keith had a very negative image of God as a result. He left church as soon as he left home.

Keith has led a hard life. He developed an addiction to alcohol and had many destructive relationships. His first marriage ended badly. Keith desires to be a better person, but never seems to live a consistent life. He did give up drinking, but life didn't seem to get any better. He and his second wife, Mary, were having difficulty in their marriage. Mary, a Christian, started going to a new church after having been inconsistent in her church attendance for many years. She liked her new church and wanted to get her two young sons to go. They argued they wouldn't go unless Dad went. Keith started going to church because of his wife's desire

for their sons to attend. Keith was skeptical about church as a result of his childhood experience.

Keith's attitude towards church and God began to change. This church is friendly and the God this pastor talks about doesn't hate people; he loves them. Keith begins to feel the call of God on his life. After a message one Sunday, he was convinced he needed to give his life to Christ and make things right.

Keith experienced relief. He became very emotional when he made a decision and couldn't identify what his emotions were and where they were coming from. Keith had remained aloof when he attended church. He sat in the back most every Sunday and didn't enter into conversation beyond the surface level. Immediately after his decision, he felt a need to become deeper friends with people in the church, but expressed a nervous concern towards opening up his life with others. He felt as if he needed support to live his life as a Christian.

Even after Keith made a commitment to Christ, his marriage was still on the rocks. How could people in the church build bridges to create a relationship of encouragement in Keith's life?

## **DISCUSSION**

Discuss the following questions.

1. What questions could we ask to help a new believer open up?
2. If we encounter resistance from a new Christian, what might we do?
3. What did you learn from this exercise?
4. What new ideas or methods might help you in your particular ministry situation?
5. How can we help new believers feel safe?
6. How can we build a trusting relationship with new converts?
7. How would we go about addressing addiction?

## **ACTION PLANNING**

What new methods will you use as you think about new converts who attend your church?

Write a plan for ministry to new converts discussing how, who, when and expected results of the encounter.