

RBC Disciple-Maker Ministry

Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us (Philippians 3:17).

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Introduction: The example of Jesus teaches us that *true discipleship is relational*. He spent a considerable amount time with His disciples. He walked with them, ate with them, prayed with them, and taught them. His way of making disciples shows that it cannot be reduced to a mere program or course. *It involves investing in people, and seeing them developed through that relationship, so that they may in turn invest in others.*

Purpose: The purpose of the RBC Disciple-Maker Ministry is to provide a formal structure for relational discipleship (John 13:34; Romans 15:7, 14; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; James 5:16; 1 Peter 4:9) within this church. We desire to be *intentional* about fulfilling the Great Commission left to us by the Lord Jesus:

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, baptizing 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).

The intent of this paragraph is to provide further clarity on the purpose of this particular ministry by distinguishing it from similar types of ministries. Many Christians meet with other Christians for accountability, Bible studies, book studies, encouragement and prayer. These things are good and commendable. These types of meetings are an important *part* of Christian discipleship. This ministry is not a critique of those gatherings. In fact, this ministry includes many of those very things. *What distinguishes this ministry is this: it is specifically designed*

to bring about replication. A person may be a part of an accountability group or Bible study for years with no intention of one day leading a group. This ministry is designed to make disciples who make disciples who make disciples. *It emphasizes replication.*

Definitions: The word disciple means “a learner” or “a student”. In the first century a disciple was someone who followed a rabbi. A disciple literally walked with a rabbi in order to learn his way of life, his mannerisms, his prayers, and his teachings. A disciple aimed to be as much like his rabbi as he could. And he did this with the goal of one day passing on his teachings and way of life to others. *A disciple eventually became a disciple-maker.*

So a *Christian* disciple is someone who has accepted the call to follow Christ, has been baptized, and is seeking to become more like Him. The disciple’s goal is to be equipped so that he or she might show others how they too can become like Jesus.

Plan: Under this heading we will discuss what must happen *before* a Disciple-Maker Group (DMG) is formed, *once* a DMG is formed, and *after* a DMG has finished meeting together.

Before a DMG is formed the person who will lead the group must be prudent in selecting three¹ people to disciple. The leader must remember that Jesus did not disciple everyone who asked (e.g. the rich young ruler), but only those who were willing to make the sacrifices necessary to follow after Him. Leaders must look for those who are seeking to grow and learn. Robby Gallaty, in his book *Rediscovering Discipleship*, offers this advice:

¹ The Bible does not prescribe a certain model for the work of discipleship, but we are wise to take our direction from Jesus. He did teach large crowds on many occasions, nevertheless He primarily devoted himself to twelve men, and from that twelve He devoted even more time to three with in that group (Peter James and John). Using Jesus’ model, we suggest that a disciple-maker meet in small groups (himself plus three others). For more see *Rediscovering Discipleship* by Robby Gallaty, (pgs. 146-151).

Consider a potential disciple's faithfulness by observing other areas of their spiritual life, such as church attendance, small group involvement, or service in the church...

Discern an individual's availability by their willingness to meet with and invest in others. Does this person carve out time to listen, study, and learn from others? ...After discerning that an individual is faithful, available, and teachable, prayerfully approach him or her and ask, "Would you be interested in studying the Bible together"? ...Also, keep in mind, men should disciple men and women should disciple women (pg. 212).

Once the leader finds three people who are willing to meet, he must properly set the expectations by having those who join² the group sign the following covenant:

I will commit to the following expectations:

I pledge myself fully to the Lord with the anticipation that I am entering a time of accelerated spiritual transformation.

I will meet with my Disciple-Maker Group for at least one hour and 15 minutes every week, for the next year and a half, unless providentially hindered.

I will complete all assignments on a weekly basis before my Disciple-Maker Group meeting, in order to contribute to the discussion.

I will respect the confidentiality of this group. In other words, I will not gossip or talk to others outside this group about the sins, temptations, prayer requests, and other private matter shared by those in this group, unless the elders need to be told as part of the process of church discipline.

I will be honest and transparent for the edification of others in this group as well as my own spiritual growth, practicing to be a disciple-maker.

I will pray every week for the other men/women who are on the discipleship journey with me.

I will begin to prepare myself to replicate the discipleship process upon completion of this group.

Signed Disciple-Maker Group Leader _____

Signed Disciple-Maker Group Participant _____

Date _____

² For advice in the case when someone may need to be asked to leave the group because they are not keeping their commitments, see *Rediscovering Discipleship*, pg. 213.

Once a DMG is formed, the weekly meetings will follow this schedule:

1. The leader opens with a brief prayer.
2. Scripture (30 minutes). The group will work through a book of the Bible (usually covering 1 chapter or less per meeting). The person leading that week will prepare and bring discussion questions.
3. Accountability (30 minutes). This is a time to confess sin and rejoice in sanctification. Everyone in the group will answer the following questions:
 - Did you spend time in the word and prayer every day this week?
 - Did you share the gospel or your testimony with an unbeliever this week?
 - How did you minister to your physical and church family this week?
 - What temptations and sins did you struggle with this week?
 - What good things did God do for you this week?
4. Prayer (15 minutes). The group will spend time praying over the things which were discussed during the meeting.

The leader of the DMG needs to keep in mind the larger picture. *The discipleship process is not complete until the disciple becomes a disciple-maker.*

He has a year and a half with this group to equip them to do the work of discipleship. Jesus had a three-step process when He called the twelve:

- First, Jesus ministered as the disciples observed and learned (Matthew 4:18-9:38).
- Second, Jesus sent them out with instructions (Matthew 10). They ministered to others and then returned to Jesus to continue their discipleship (Matthew 11:1-28:10).
- Third, the disciples were entrusted with the task of making disciples (Matthew 28:16-20).

Following the Lord's model, the leader of the DMG will spend the first few months leading and guiding the meetings, allowing the people in the group to observe and learn. After that the leader will begin to allow the other members to lead the discussion. The leader of the DMG will follow up after, providing direction and encouragement, so that the disciple is better equipped to lead the next time.

In the final six-month period the leader of the DMG will need to do the hard work of evaluation: Have I adequately prepared these people to disciple others? The following questions should bring some clarity:

- Were they faithful in attendance, in fulfilling their assignments, and in participation through discussion and prayer? If so, this is a good indicator that they are ready to do the work of discipleship.
- Was there evident spiritual growth over the last year and a half? In other words, did they actually become more Christ-like? If they are imitating Jesus, then they can show others how to as well.
- How did they answer their accountability questions? In other words, are they regular in the spiritual disciplines, in the work of evangelism, and in serving their family and the church? Are they frequently and repeatedly overcome by their flesh or are they walking in the Spirit? Is God's power evident in their lives? If they were faithful in these areas, this points to their ability to lead a group in the future.

Once the elders approve these future disciple makers, the leader of the DMG will need to prepare them to begin their own group. He must ask them to prudently compile the names of others they wish to meet with in a new DMG and then encourage them reach out and ask: "Would you be interested in studying the Bible together?" Ideally, these new groups will be ready to start as soon as this one ends, that is, after a year and a half.

After this DMG finishes meeting together the process will begin again. The previous members of the DMG will be entrusted with the responsibility to make disciples, and the original leader will have three more people ready to begin a new DMG as well. *This plan should allow RBC to be disciples of Jesus, who make disciples of Jesus, who in turn make disciples of Jesus.* In this way, we hope to do our part in seeing the Great Commission fulfilled.

Questions:

Q: How are the groups going to be formed?

A: Those people who will lead DMGs will make their availability known and people may then sign up.

Q: Are the elders going to provide guidance on what would be studied or will that be up to the leader of each group? Will there be homework?

A: The elders think it is best to allow each group to work this out for themselves. The only requirement that the elders have, in regard to his question, is that the Bible itself is studied. Supplemental materials may be used, but they must not displace the primary place of Scripture in making disciples.

Q: Do people need to participate for 1.5 years before they can lead a group?

A: We will handle this on a case by case basis. If someone meets the qualification in this plan before the 1.5 years is finished, they may very well be ready to lead another group.

Q: Could the meeting schedule look different than proposed in this document. For example, what about meeting bi-weekly for two hours instead of weekly? Or again, may people meet twice a month, once in person and once by Skype or through email?

A: The short answer is “yes” to the use of technology and “no” to meeting every other week. The example of Jesus teaches us that discipleship is *deeply relational* and it requires the sacrifice of time invested in others. We are asking those who would lead and participate in a DMG to commit to regular weekly meetings in order to stay *very closely* connected to each other. We understand that people may need to miss a meeting on occasion, but when that happens, those who meet weekly will only be separated from the group for 2 weeks rather than a whole month.

With that said, we understand that many people will not be able to make this kind of time commitment. If that describes you, feel free to use the principles and ideas in this document and meet with people at whatever frequency you desire. We are only requiring the weekly meetings for those who desire to be a part of this ministry in a formal way.

Q: Can couples stay together in a group?

A: We actually have, in the NT, an example of this very thing.

Acts 18:24-26: Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

So yes, couples may stay together for these meetings. This will slightly change the size of the groups, but so long as they remain small, this should work just fine.

Q: Is this ministry something that children can be involved with?

A: Yes, we want our children to see discipleship take place and learn how to become disciple-makers, but this must be handled carefully. Again, children may be involved, but it will depend upon the maturity of the child. *Since this is a ministry of replication*, and we do not want to put minors in a position of leadership over minors, a participant must be at least 16.5 years old to join a DMG so they can lead a DMG upon completion of their training. If the child is simply seeking to grow in their knowledge of God and looking to have other trusted adults they can confide in we suggest plugging in to the Sunday School, Men's or Women's Discipleship, Care Groups, Student Discipleship, or just meeting informally with another adult or group for encouragement and support. If they are spiritually mature, and seeking to be equipped to make disciples, they may join a DMG.