

The Growing Disciple

Five Practices Every Christian Needs



The **FIRST** in a Series of **6** Small Group Studies



MDPC

Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church





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Session One • Introduction

1 Welcome everyone and open with prayer.

2 Introduce every group member (10-15 minutes).

Go around the group and have every member answer the following questions aloud:

- What is your name?
- What is your connection to MDPC or to another Christian fellowship?
- What in the past seven days has given you joy?

(Please note each member's time should be brief. If 10 members speak for five minutes, you will have taken 50 minutes to introduce yourselves!)

3 Read aloud about The Equipping Disciple Series, The Growing Disciple Course, and Group Expectations (10 minutes).

The Equipping Disciple is a multi-course small group curriculum developed at Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church. Each course is six sessions long, with each session lasting approximately 60-70 minutes. (To take up to 90 minutes, simply extend the group's participation in one or more areas of the session's lesson plan as desired.)

There are six 6-session courses designed for The Equipping Disciple, including this course you are starting now. The courses are, in order of when they'll be available:

- The Growing Disciple (February 2020)
- The Witnessing Disciple (April 2020)
- The Studying Disciple (August 2020)
- The Giving Disciple (October 2020)
- The Praying Disciple (February 2021)
- The Serving Disciple (April 2021)

Another multi-course series of small group curriculum, The Maturing Disciple, is scheduled to launch in 2022.

Our initial course, The Growing Disciple, has the sub-title Five Practices Every Christian Needs. After this introductory session, each subsequent session will focus on one particular spiritual practice that will help us, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to become growing disciples of Jesus Christ. The five resources and practices are:

- Bible Study
- Prayer
- Witness
- Service
- Generosity

Each session will include study and discussion on a Biblical passage relevant to the practice discussed. Also, each session will include opportunities to learn and to develop these spiritual practices, such as devotional reading, Scripture memory, and other spiritual practices shown by the experience of millions of Christ-followers to be nourishing to the Christian life. Directions for those leading a group are found in the session materials themselves, not in a separate leader's guide.

So your group will be an enjoyable and fruitful spiritual growth experience, each member will strive to embrace joyfully the following:

- Commit to attending consistently.
- Contribute to a group climate of mutual trust, respect, honesty, and vulnerability.
- Discuss willingly. This is not a lecture. Your input is vital!
- Prepare in advance for the upcoming group session, barring unexpected events. (If such events occur, come to the session anyway.)
- Write in this guide. (But remember, this is not a writing class. Brief notes may suffice.)
- Bring your Bible every time. Ordinarily, Biblical passages won't be printed in the guide.
- Anticipate that the Holy Spirit will do something in you during this time of focus.

4 Read, study, and discuss as a group Colossians 2:6-7 (30 minutes).

Read Colossians 2:6-7 in a Bible translation of your choice, then respond to the following questions and comments. Feel free to write down comments, thoughts, notes, etc., in the spaces below. When you meet as a group, read aloud Colossians 2:6-7. Then take one question at a time as a group and share your responses with one another.

Briefly summarize the “plot” of Colossians 2:6-7 in your own words.

If Colossians 2:6-7 is not included in Scripture, what will be missing in our overall Christian faith and practice? What other Scriptures support or expand upon Colossians 2:6-7?

What insight, teaching, or truth from Colossians 2:6-7 shines brightly to you, like the proverbial light bulb coming on? Something new and fresh? Something you've known before but never thought of in quite this way? Or something else? Express briefly to the group what it is and why it is significant to you.

What in Colossians 2:6-7 raises questions in your mind? It may be a word, a phrase, a verse, a concept, a theological point, or another matter. Share your questions with the group and discuss some possible responses.

What in Colossians 2:6-7 points to Jesus and His gospel?

What is God saying to you about your discipleship through Colossians 2:6-7? How do you need to act upon the Holy Spirit's guidance this week?

5 Read aloud about devotional Bible reading and responding (5 minutes).

We just finished a Bible study. Another encounter with Scripture growing disciples need to experience often is the devotional reading of the Bible. The consistent devotional reading of Scripture is an important way to know the continuing presence and guidance of Christ.

For our 6-week course, we will read the Gospel of Mark together as our devotional reading. (Note: if you are already a consistent reader of the Bible, well done! For our time together as a group, though, we ask you either to add Mark to your present reading, or to substitute Mark for your reading schedule.)

We will divide this incredible, fast-paced Gospel this way:

- Before Session 2, read Mark 1:1–3:35.
- Before Session 3, read Mark 4:1–6:56.
- Before Session 4, read Mark 7:1–9:50.
- Before Session 5, read Mark 10:1–12:44.
- Before Session 6, read Mark 13:1–16:8.

You have great flexibility in how you schedule the passages from Mark. For example, you may:

- Read a portion each day.
- Read a chapter a day for three days, giving you four days off.
- Read the first half of the passage one day and the second half another day.
- Read the entire assignment at one extended sitting.

Please don't read mechanically. Reflect upon what you read, and prayerfully discern God's guidance. In the appendix in the back of this study guide, you will find Reading Response forms to help you answer two questions of each weekly reading from Mark:

- "Of all I have read from Mark (chapters and verses), what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?
- "What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?"

Please write your responses in the space allotted. In the remaining group sessions, you'll have the opportunity to share how God has been working through your devotional reading time.

6 Read aloud this introduction to Scripture memorization (5 minutes).

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You. (Psalm 119:11, ESV)

Memorizing anything, especially Bible verses, gets little respect in our day. With the availability of search engines and smart phones, why bother? All you have to do is Google what you want, and there it is! However, Psalm 119:11 insists that storing God's word within our hearts (in other words, memorizing Scripture!) can be an effective means of enabling and strengthening faithful Christian living. Its true Scripture memory will take some effort and determination. But it is well worth it.

Our memory verses for this study are the ones we just discussed, Colossians 2:6-7. These two verses neatly and effectively sum up God's process for developing growing disciples of Jesus Christ. For convenience's sake, we will memorize them from the NIV so we can help one another more easily:

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thanksgiving. (Colossians 2:6-7, NIV)

Some helpful hints for memorizing Colossians 2:6-7 are:

- Write out the verses in longhand. Something about writing imprints the words on your memory. For some, repeated writing in longhand is quite helpful.
- Write the verses on a 3"x 5" card. Carry it with you and refer to the verses often.
- Say the verses aloud as you practice.
- Break up the verses into their smaller phrase units. Start with the first phrase and work on it until you are comfortable. Then add the second phrase. Continue to add phrases as you learn the verses bit by bit.
- Reflect on the verses' meaning. Connect the verses with their significance for your life.
- Don't forget to include the Scriptural reference and translation at the end, such as "Colossians 2:6-7, NIV." (Studies have shown it's helpful to know where to find in the Bible the verses you memorize.)
- Practice often and review regularly. "Overlearning" is often what's needed to break through.

Starting at our next gathering, we will divide into pairs for a brief time of practicing our verses. One will say the verses and receive the helpful correction (if needed) of the other. Then the roles will reverse. We will continue this rhythm throughout our sessions. You will want to work on your verses in advance in order to take advantage of this opportunity.

7 Talk about what's needed for next time (5 minutes).

- Pray for God's direction and empowerment for the group and for each other.
- Pray specifically for requests from group members.
- Prepare for the Bible study on "Bible Study" from 2 Timothy 3:10-17.
- Read Mark 1:1-3:35 and complete the Reading Response form in the back of the guide.
- Start memorizing Colossians 2:6-7 and be prepared to practice with a partner at the next session.

8 Close the gathering in prayer.

- 1 **Welcome everyone and open with prayer.**
- 2 **Greet and “check in” with group members (5 minutes).**
- 3 **Share from your Reading Response form for Mark 1:1–3:35 and discuss briefly (10-15 minutes).**
- 4 **Read, study, and discuss as a group 2 Timothy 3:10-17 (40 minutes).**

Read 2 Timothy 3:10-17 in a Bible translation of your choice, then respond to the following questions and comments. Feel free to write down comments, thoughts, notes, etc., in the spaces below. When you meet as a group, read aloud 2 Timothy 3:10-17. Then take one question at a time as a group and share your responses with one another.

Briefly summarize 2 Timothy 3:10-17 in your own words. Note the key movements within this passage’s plot (for example, Paul moves from his own experiences in verses 10-13 to his guidance to Timothy in verses 14-17).

Pay special attention to 2 Timothy 3:16-17. How does Paul describe Scripture’s status? Scripture’s purpose? Scripture’s application to our lives? Why might this combination of status, purpose, and application be important in our Christian growth?

If 2 Timothy 3:10-17 is left out of Scripture, what will be lacking in our overall Christian faith and practice? What other Scripture passages either affirm or expand upon 2 Timothy 3:10-17?

There is a lot going on in 2 Timothy 3:10-17. What direction, doctrine, or wisdom stands out to you as being particularly significant? Express briefly what it is and why it is meaningful to you.

What from 2 Timothy 3:10-17 makes you scratch your head in confusion or even dismay? Share your questions with the group and discuss some possible responses.

How does 2 Timothy 3:10-17 reveal to us Jesus and His good news? Where do you see Jesus in this passage?

What is God saying to you about your relationship with Scripture through 2 Timothy 3:10-17? Your Christian discipleship overall? How do you need to act upon the Holy Spirit's guidance this week?

What is one thing from 2 Timothy 3:10-17 that would be helpful for a friend or a loved one? How might you share it?

How may the group pray for you regarding what you have encountered through studying and discussing 2 Timothy 3:10-17? How can you pray for the other members of the group? Share with one another.

5 Divide into pairs and practice saying the memory verse without notes (10 minutes).

If you have not memorized these verses yet, don't worry! Say what you can. Continue to work on Colossians 2:6-7 (NIV). You can do it! You will have an opportunity next time to show how far you have come.

6 Talk about what's needed for next time (5 minutes).

- Pray for God's direction and empowerment for the group and for each other. Pray specifically for requests from group members as noted in the study of 2 Timothy 3:10-17 and other concerns.
- Prepare for the Bible study on "Prayer" from Luke 11:1-13.
- Read Mark 4:1-6:56 and complete the Reading Response form in the back of the guide.
- Work on memorizing Colossians 2:6-7 and be prepared to practice with a partner at the next session.

7 Close the gathering in prayer.



Session Three • Prayer

- 1 **Welcome everyone and open with prayer.**
- 2 **Greet and “check in” with group members** (5 minutes).
- 3 **Share from your Reading Response form for Mark 4:1–6:56 and discuss briefly** (10-15 minutes).
- 4 **Read, study, and discuss as a group Luke 11:1-13** (40 minutes).

Read Luke 11:1-13 in a Bible translation of your choice, then respond to the following questions and comments. Feel free to write down comments, thoughts, notes, etc., in the spaces below. When you meet as a group, read aloud Luke 11:1-13. Then take one question at a time as a group and share your responses with one another.

Briefly summarize the “who-what-when-where-how” of Luke 11:1-13 in your own words. Note the key movements within this passage.

Pay special attention to Luke 11:2-4. What elements of prayer does Jesus highlight? How are they significant?

Give attention to the instruction on prayer Jesus provides in 11:5-13. What are essential characteristics in a life of prayer, according to Jesus?

There is a lot of “meat” in Luke 11:1-13. What guidance, teaching, or practical application stands out to you as being especially important? Express briefly what it is and why it hits home with you.

What from Luke 11:1-13 gives you heartburn? Share your concerns with the group and discuss some possible responses.

How does Luke 11:1-13 show us Jesus and His gospel? Where do you see Jesus at work?

What is God saying to you about your practice of prayer through Luke 11:1-13? Your Christian discipleship overall? How do you need to act upon His instruction this week?

Name something from Luke 11:1-13 that a friend or loved one needs to hear from you. How might you share it?

How may the group pray for you regarding what you have encountered through Luke 11:1-13? How can you pray for the other members of the group? Share with one another.

5 Divide into pairs and practice saying the memory verse without notes (10 minutes).

You probably have made progress on memorizing Colossians 2:6-7. If so, wonderful! If you are struggling, remember God is with you as you memorize these verses. Go as far as you're able. You will have an opportunity next time to continue your work.

6 Talk about what's needed for next time (5 minutes).

- Pray for God's direction and empowerment for the group and for each other.
- Pray specifically for requests from group members as noted in the study of Luke 11:1-13 and other concerns.
- Prepare for the Bible study on "Witness" from 1 Peter 3:13-16.
- Read Mark 7:1-9:50 and complete the Reading Response form in the back of the guide.
- Continue working on Colossians 2:6-7 and be prepared to practice with a partner at the next session.

7 Close the gathering in prayer.



- 1 Welcome everyone and open with prayer.
- 2 Greet and “check in” with group members (5 minutes).
- 3 Share from your Reading Response form for Mark 7:1–9:50 and discuss briefly (10-15 minutes).
- 4 Read, study, and discuss as a group 1 Peter 3:13-16 (40 minutes).

Read 1 Peter 3:13-16 in a Bible translation of your choice, then respond to the following questions and comments. Feel free to write down comments, thoughts, notes, etc., in the spaces below. When you meet as a group, read aloud 1 Peter 3:13-16. Then take one question at a time as a group and share your responses with one another.

Briefly summarize the plot, the “who-what-when-where-how,” of 1 Peter 3:13-16 in your own words. Note the key elements in the passage’s movement.

Pay special attention to 1 Peter 3:15-16a, the crux of the passage. What does Peter encourage his readers to do? Why?

In 1 Peter 3:13-16, what direction, doctrine, or wisdom stands out to you as being particularly significant? Why do you think some readers consider this passage a “call to Christian apologetics”?

What from 1 Peter 3:13-16 causes you to shake your head? Share your concerns with the group and discuss some possible responses.

How does 1 Peter 3:13-16 reveal the love, grace, and mercy of Jesus? How is the gospel expressed in it?

What is God saying to you about your Christian witness through 1 Peter 3:13-16? How do you need to respond to God's direction this week?

What is something from 1 Peter 3:13-16 you might share with a colleague, family member, or friend? How can you do so before the group meets again?

How may we pray for one another regarding 1 Peter 3:13-16? How can you pray for the other members of the group? Share with one another.

5 Divide into pairs and practice saying the memory verse without notes (10 minutes).

If you have not yet successfully memorized Colossians 2:6-7, you no doubt have made great progress. Go as far as you're able. You will have an opportunity next time to continue your work.

6 Talk about the next course after this one in The Equipped Disciple series: The Witnessing Disciple (5 minutes).

Our present study, The Growing Disciple, is the introduction to a series called The Equipping Disciple, a multi-course small group curriculum developed at Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church. The next course for a group to experience is The Witnessing Disciple. This course's six sessions will focus and expand upon the topic tackled in today's session. Each session will take approximately 60-70 minutes, with expansion up to 90 minutes as the group desires.

Your group is encouraged to experience together The Witnessing Disciple after you have completed The Growing Disciple. The study guide will be available for free on the Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church website at witnessing.mdpc.org.

7 Talk about what's needed for next time (5 minutes).

- Pray for God's direction and empowerment for the group and for each other. Pray specifically for requests from group members as noted in the study of 1 Peter 3:13-16 and other concerns.
- Prepare for the Bible study on "Service" from Ephesians 2:8-10.
- Read Mark 10:1-12:44 and complete the Reading Response form in the back of the guide.
- Continue working on Colossians 2:6-7 and be prepared to practice with a partner at the next session.

8 Close the gathering in prayer.



- 1 **Welcome everyone and open with prayer.**
- 2 **Greet and “check in” with group members (5 minutes).**
- 3 **Share from your Reading Response form for Mark 10:1–12:44 and discuss briefly (10-15 minutes).**
- 4 **Read, study, and discuss as a group Ephesians 2:8-10 (40 minutes).**

Read Ephesians 2:8-10 in a Bible translation of your choice, then respond to the following questions and comments. Feel free to write down comments, thoughts, notes, etc., in the spaces below. When you meet as a group, read aloud Ephesians 2:8-10. Then take one question at a time as a group and share your responses with one another.

Briefly summarize the flow of Ephesians 2:8-10 in your own words. Note the key movements within this short passage.

Pay special attention to Ephesians 2:10. How is Ephesians 2:10 a natural result of the message contained in Ephesians 2:8-9? Describe the relationship between salvation and service.

If Ephesians 2:8-10 is not in Scripture, what is missing in the Christian life? What other passages in Scripture affirm or expand upon Ephesians 2:8-10?

In Ephesians 2:8-10, what stands out to you as being particularly significant? Why do you think we often love Ephesians 2:8-9 and neglect Ephesians 2:10?

How does Ephesians 2:8-10 express the gospel of Jesus Christ in deep, profound ways?

What is God saying to you about your Christian service through Ephesians 2:8-10? How may you respond to God's direction about serving Him and others this week?

What is something from Ephesians 2:8-10 you can share with someone you know and love? How may you do so in the next seven days?

How may we pray for one another regarding Ephesians 2:8-10? How can you pray for the other members of the group? Share with one another.

5 Divide into pairs and practice saying the memory verse without notes (5 minutes).

We are coming down the home stretch for memorizing Colossians 2:6-7. Chances are you're well prepared by now to say the entire passage without referring to your notes or needing any prompts from your practice partner. If not, continue to work on Colossians 2:6-7 for the last session. You can do it!

6 Talk about the next course after this one in The Equipped Disciple series: The Witnessing Disciple (5 minutes).

Have you talked about going through The Witnessing Disciple together after The Growing Disciple? The study guide will be available for free on the Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church website at witnessing.mdpc.org. Continuing your momentum as a group will help you in your discipleship. Discuss what dates and times will be good for your members.

7 Talk about what's needed for next time (5 minutes).

- Pray for God's direction and empowerment for the group and for each other. Pray specifically for requests from group members as noted in the study of Ephesians 2:8-10 and other concerns.
- Prepare for the Bible study on "Generosity" from 2 Corinthians 9:1-15.
- Read Mark 13:1-16:8 and complete the Reading Response form in the back of the guide.
- Continue working on Colossians 2:6-7 and be prepared to practice with a partner at the next session. If you have it memorized, be prepared to say it again as part of the "overlearning" process.

8 Close the gathering in prayer.



- 1 Welcome everyone and open with prayer.**
- 2 Greet and “check in” with group members (5 minutes).**
- 3 Share from your Reading Response form for Mark 13:1–16:8 and discuss briefly (10-15 minutes).**
- 4 Read, study, and discuss as a group 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 (40 minutes).**

Read 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 in a Bible translation of your choice, then reflect upon your responses to the following questions and comments. Feel free to write down comments, thoughts, notes, etc., in the spaces below. When you meet as a group, read aloud 2 Corinthians 9:1-15. Then take one question at a time as a group and share your responses with one another.

Briefly summarize 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 in your own words. Note the key movements within the plot of this passage.

Pay special attention to 2 Corinthians 9:6-11, the heart of the passage. How does 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 describe an overflow of God’s generosity in a person’s life? How might this passage be misunderstood in today’s world?

If 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 is not in Scripture, what is missing in Christian thinking and living? What other passages in Scripture affirm or expand upon 2 Corinthians 9:1-15?

There is a lot going on in 2 Corinthians 9:1-15. What stands out to you as being especially important for Christian discipleship?

What from 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 raises red flags for you? Share them with the group and discuss some possible responses.

How does 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 mirror the gospel of Jesus Christ? How does the passage express God's love and mercy?

What are you hearing from God about your generosity through 2 Corinthians 9:1-15? How do you need to respond to God's prompting about being generous this week?

What is something from 2 Corinthians 9:1-15 you could share with a friend, colleague, or family member? How could you do so in the next seven days?

How may we pray for one another regarding 2 Corinthians 9:1-15? How can you pray for the other members of the group? Share with one another.

5 Divide into pairs and practice saying the memory verse without notes (5 minutes).

It is likely you can say Colossians 2:6-7 without referring to notes or needing any help from your practice partner. If not, keep working on it. Your effort in retaining God's word will bear fruit in your life in its appropriate season.

6 Talk about the next course after this one in The Equipped Disciple series: The Witnessing Disciple (5 minutes).

If the group is willing, schedule your study and discussion of The Witnessing Disciple if you haven't already done so. This study is online at witnessing.mdpc.org.

7 As you close in prayer, share at least one benefit you have experienced from participating in The Growing Disciple.

Share your prayer praises and requests as you continue your Christian growth. Give thanks to God for His grace, growth, and encouragement (10 minutes).

Reading Response Forms for Mark's Gospel

For Session 2 • Mark 1:1–3:35

Of all I have read from Mark 1:1–3:35, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?

For Session 3 • Mark 4:1–6:56

Of all I have read from Mark 4:1–6:56, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?

For Session 4 • Mark 7:1–9:50

Of all I have read from Mark 7:1–9:50, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?

For Session 5 • Mark 10:1–12:44

Of all I have read from Mark 10:1–12:44, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?

For Session 6 • Mark 13:1–16:8

Of all I have read from Mark 13:1–16:8, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?



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