



D-GROUP STARTER GUIDE

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.

2 Timothy 2:2

Since Jesus gave us the mandate to make disciples in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), we need to define what that process looks like. Discipleship is intentionally entering into someone's life to help them know & follow Jesus and obey His teachings, & to equip them to repeat the process.

Disciple-Making doesn't happen by accident. It's intentional. There has to be a plan, an effort, a path forward. It also doesn't happen at a distance. When you intentionally enter into someone's life, it's not like a class or seminar, it is life on life ministry.

WHAT IS A D-GROUP?

A D-Group, or Discipleship Group, is a same-gender group of 3-5 believers that meet regularly for the purpose of being disciples who make disciples. When they gather together, D-groups pray for one another, share what they have been studying in God's word, hold each other accountable, and share life together. The goal of each member of a D-Group is to replicate themselves at a set time (usually after participating in a group around a year) and in turn lead a D- Group of their own. This is the way we multiply spiritually and grow as believers.

What is the difference between a D-Group and a Life Group or Bible Study?

First, the D-Group is a closed group, rather than an open group. Life Groups and Bible studies are usually open groups (or they should be); that is, they are open to anyone and everyone who would like to attend. Life Groups should help people grow in their faith, but they also play a vital role in connecting people to each other within the church. A D-Group is, by design, closed to a handful of people. It is intentionally

small and a person joins the group by invitation only so that there is a high level of trust and commitment.***

****That being said, one of the issues of a closed group is making sure we are not being exclusive and open to new people. If someone new wants to jump in at the beginning, it may be best to allow them to. Or at the least, find another group that has a spot or let them know you are going to multiply at the end of the year and you would be happy if they joined you at that time. Please be very sensitive to new folks interested in joining your group.*

The structure of the D-Group is completely different than a Life Group or Bible Study. It is the shift from a lecture atmosphere with one teacher facilitating a discussion of a room full of students to a high-trust, accountable relationship with a handful of people. Where a Life Group or Bible Study's purpose is primarily teaching and relational connection, a D-group is meant to primarily focus on personal study and life application.

Everyone needs a Life Group to find their place to belong, people who care for them as a church family, and to grow in their knowledge of the faith. A D-group would also benefit many people by providing an accelerated time of spiritual growth and life-change as they apply what they have been learning and have accountability in their lives.

The last difference between a life group and a d-group is that a d-group only meets for a specific amount of time (9 months to 1 year) and then intentionally multiplies. The goal of every d-group is for the current members to form their own group after they meet for the designated time frame and walk new people through the same process.

How do I choose who to challenge to be in a D-Group?

When you are thinking and praying about who to ask to join your D-Group, it's important to look for followers of Christ who are FAT:

Faithful – They are faithful to do what they already know.

Available – They have time and availability to commit to the group time and process.
Teachable – They are willing to learn and display a desire to grow.

It's important to remember you aren't looking for perfect people. But it's also vital that if the people you are considering don't match these 3 attributes, you will be much better off in not challenging them to a discipleship group. Ask those who are willing to join to pray and consider the D-group commitment.

Our discipleship Pastor can facilitate everyone interested in finding a group so that people don't have to have a previous connection to join a group. People you see regularly at church, your Life Group, or other previous connections can be a great fishing pond for a D-group. If you already have some kind of a relationship with the people in your group they might be willing to join in more openly. Often though, you will be surprised how d-groups help connect people you barely know very quickly into great friends! The one thing we always want to guard against is being cliquy.

THE ESSENTIALS OF A D-GROUP

The group doesn't need to be larger than 3-5 people and groups are intentionally single-gender. One of the benefits of a small group of 3-5 people is that there is a high level of flexibility. For example, some may have the time to meet weekly but others just every other week.

- 1) Meet regularly (either weekly or bi-weekly) for around 60 minutes.**
 - Do not meet less frequently than every other week as it is not enough to really build accountability, trust, and friendship.
- 2) Choose a Bible Reading Plan to follow and hold one another accountable to.**
 - Encouraging regular bible reading instead of a book study is what makes a d-group different than a typical bible study. We don't want to add another study to someone's schedule, we would rather see them devote time to knowing God's Word and applying it to their lives and make that a priority first.
 - Reading Plan options:

- F260 Reading Plan (see replicate.org)
 - 260 selected readings, five days a week for 52 weeks.
- F260 New Testament Reading Plan (see replicate.org)
- One Year Bible or Chronological Bible
- The Bible Recap (thebiblerecap.com)
 - This is a reading plan and a daily podcast that walks through the Bible reading.
- Bible App Reading Plans

3) Journaling

- Everyone should have a journaling or note-taking system to help synthesize, apply, and share what they have been learning. A HEAR journal is an excellent way to do this. See below for guidance on a HEAR journal and a sample HEAR journal entry.

4) Accountability

- As we are applying passages of scripture, talking about life, intentionally ask questions to help build accountability. Here are some helpful accountability questions to ask regularly:
 - Which of your H.E.A.R. Journals stood out the most to you this week and what are you doing about it?”
 - Have you honored God and your spouse with your thoughts, words, and actions this week?
 - Have you spent quality time with your family this week?
 - Have you given in to any addictive behavior this past week? (alcohol, tobacco, video games, work, TV, etc.)
 - Have you told any lies or half-truths this week?
 - Have you damaged another person by your words, either behind his or her back or face-to-face?
 - Have you participated in anything unethical this week? Have you been completely honest with your answers today?

5) Prayer

- One of the greatest ways we can serve one another is to pray for each other. Each meeting or by text, share prayer requests and pray for each other weekly.

WHAT IS A H.E.A.R. JOURNAL?

A H.E.A.R. Journal is a simple way to help you read the Bible with the intention of applying it. By asking four simple questions, you can understand and apply any passage. In addition, journaling is a great discipline because it helps you retain three times more of what you read.

Every week, each of us will share a H.E.A.R. Journal and discuss what we have heard from God's Word. There is not a set amount of H.E.A.R. Journals that you must do each week, but the goal with this discipline, as with all of the others, is to improve as time goes on.

Consider how often you currently journal and do "+1" of that. So, if you have never journaled, just try to do a couple a week. If you journal occasionally, try to do three times a week. The hope is that as you get more comfortable with this discipline and experience its benefit, you will want to increase this number throughout the year.

As you read through your reading plan this week, create a H.E.A.R. Journal by using these four questions.

- **H (HIGHLIGHT):** What is a verse(s) that stood out to you in your reading? What phrases or themes repeat? What are important words or questions that have come up?
- **E (EXPLAIN):** What is the author's intended meaning in the context of the passage (what comes before and after it)? What notes are helpful to explaining what you highlighted (feel free to use resources like free online bible commentaries, your study Bible, cross references, or gotquestions.org for answers to difficult Bible questions)?
- **A (APPLY):** What is the principle to live by today or something I learned about the overarching themes of scripture or the character of God?
- **R (RESPOND):** How will I respond to the application in my relationships and/or situations this week? Write out a prayer of response.

GOOD APPLICATION QUESTIONS FOR EXAMINING A SCRIPTURE:

A helpful framework to use when trying to discern what application you should take from a text is S.P.E.C.K

S - Is there a SIN to confess and avoid?

P - Is there a PROMISE to keep?

E - Is there an EXAMPLE to follow?

C - Is there a COMMAND to obey?

K - Is there KNOWLEDGE of God I need to reflect on?

Once you identify what your application is, you can finish your RESPONSE section by asking, "How should I respond to this application in my relationships and/or situations this week?"

****Each week when your group gets together, you will share something from your H.E.A.R. Journal and discuss it together.*

SAMPLE H.E.A.R. JOURNAL ENTRY

READ: PHILIPPIANS 4:13

DATE: JANUARY 10, 2019

TITLE: SECRET OF CONTENTMENT

H (Highlight) - "I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me."

Philippians 4:13

E (Explain) - Paul was telling the church at Philippi that he has discovered the secret of contentment. No matter the situation in Paul's life, he realized that Christ was all he needed, and Christ was the one who strengthened him to persevere through difficult times.

A (Apply) - In my life, I will experience many ups and downs. My contentment is not found in circumstances. Rather, it is based on my relationship with Jesus Christ. Only Jesus gives me the strength I need to be content in every circumstance of life.

R (Respond) - Lord Jesus, please help me as I strive to be content in You. Through Your strength, I can make it through any situation I face.

D-GROUP COMMITMENT (TO GO OVER FOR YOUR FIRST MEETING)

Having people understand the expectations of a group and committing to the time it takes to grow in a D-group is essential when starting out. Take the first meeting to walk through this commitment together and ask them to consider this commitment before meeting together for a second time.

Over the next year, I will do my best to...

- Give myself fully to the Lord during this time as I anticipate a season of accelerated spiritual transformation.
- Commit to this group and weekly or bi-weekly meetings. When I am unable to attend, I will stay involved by sharing my bible reading and prayer requests.
- Commit to the weekly disciplines of Bible Reading, journaling, accountability, and prayer.
- Contribute to a group atmosphere of confidentiality, honesty, and transparency.
- Pray every week for the other members of my d-group.
- Pray and look for others in my life who I can invite into a new D-group when my current group decides to multiply.

Once your d-group members have acknowledged they are ready to commit to meeting, register your group at gatewaybc.com so we can continue to follow up with you and provide support for your group.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE OF D-GROUP MEETINGS

Week 1:

- Meet together and discuss what the purpose of a d-group is (the intention is spiritual growth through reading scripture and doing a HEAR journal, accountability and trust, and multiplication (the prayer is at least one or two of the group members will commit to leading another group when this group is done). Explain what Bible reading plan you are doing and how they can find it.
- Explain the differences between a d-group and a normal small group.
 - A d-group is a closed group in order to build trust and vulnerability.
 - That doesn't mean we can't find a way to add new people in the beginning of meeting, we want to be very careful not to turn people away harshly. But we need to be mindful that the group shouldn't be bigger than 4 or 5 people and that we may need to start a new group to add people or wait until another cycle of groups to have new people join. Please contact Bart for help if you have someone interested in joining but your group is too big or has already been meeting for a while.
 - A d-group does not have a leader who teaches but is based on everyone's willingness to contribute what they have been learning in their reading each week. There will be a facilitator who helps guide your time and schedule times to meet.
 - The focus of a d-group is application. Always make sure we are moving people toward applying what they already know, not just simply information transfer.
 - That might mean one week you chase a rabbit trail during group in helping answers someone's questions, deal with issues that arise, etc.
- Give them the d-group commitment and ask them to go home and pray about it and decide whether or not they will commit to the process by week 2.

Week 2-4:

- One important way to start the first few weeks is to ask one person a week to share a brief testimony of how they came to faith in Christ. This is a great way to start because how can someone grow as a disciple if they don't first understand the Gospel? This is a good time to clarify that it is not tradition or our good works that save us but repentance for our sin and faith in Christ's work on the cross to forgive us of those sins.
 - TIP: Give people a week notice before asking them to share.
- Ask members to share at least one of their HEAR Journal entries with the group and specifically how they are applying it to their lives.
- If you incorporate scripture memory, ask everyone to give the verse for that week their best shot and to say it aloud.
- Wrap up with asking how you can pray for one another and hold each other accountable this next week.

SAMPLE MEETING STRUCTURE (Typical Week)

Here are some elements your weekly meetings can include:

Fellowship: Spend the first ten minutes catching up. If you want, you can be more structured during this time and have each person share their "high" and "low" of the week.

Bible Reading and HEAR Journals: Study the Word of God together. A great way to do this is to share [HEAR journals](#) from the week. The goal of studying the Bible is to apply the Word of God. Remember, knowledge without application is useless information.

Here are some good application questions to utilize:

- What are you hearing from God, and what are you doing about it?
- What is God teaching you, and how is it affecting your life?
- Is there a promise to claim?

- Is there an action or attitude to avoid?
- Is there a principle to apply?

Scripture Memory: If you are incorporating scripture memory, have everyone recite the verse or verses as best they can.

Accountability: Spend a few moments asking questions and keeping each other accountable. All accountability should be saturated with grace, not legalism. You can't expect what you don't inspect.

Prayer: Share prayer requests from readings and accountability time and have a member pray.

I WANT TO START A D-GROUP, WHAT'S NEXT?

1. Reach out to Bart Cook at bartc@gatewaybc.com and let him know you are interested in facilitating a group so we can provide you with training and resources.
2. Begin to pray that God would lead you to 2-3 others who are faithful, available, and teachable and wanting to enter into a time of intensive spiritual growth.
3. Set up a time for your first meeting to talk about the d-group commitment and what the group will do.
4. Register your group at www.gatewaybc.com/gatewaygroups/