



# WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

“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 (ESV)

## WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

Discipleship is the umbrella term that talks about *the holistic process of becoming a disciple of Jesus and becoming like Him, through the person of the Spirit, by the guidance of God’s Word, with one another*. We say *holistic* to prevent any confusion with the common practice of relegating the process to a program or a series of teachings. We say *process* to indicate the need for intention and structure. We use the word *disciple* to indicate a very specific kind of relationship and identity (defined below) against other more contemporary vocabulary that is less precise. We say *Jesus* to orient the whole process towards the appropriate person. We say *becoming* to affirm the ongoing change essential and unavoidable in the life of a disciple. We say *like Him* to indicate the inclination and goal of that change. We locate the power for change in the *person of the Spirit*. We recognize *God’s Word* as His special revelation by which disciples know truth. And finally, we say *one another* to describe the necessity of personal relationships in a local church community to the process of growth as a disciple.

## WHO IS A DISCIPLE?

The New Testament depicts a disciple as someone who has been called to know and be known by Jesus, to love and like Jesus, to join Jesus’ family of disciples, to be changed by Jesus in the context of community and relationship, to do what Jesus does in life and ministry, and to make more disciples. In other words, disciples love Jesus, are changed by Jesus, and are committed to His mission. In Matthew 4:19, Jesus says to Peter and Andrew, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” He calls them to Himself and invites them to be co-laborers in calling others to follow after Him.

## DISCIPLESHIP AS A WHOLE-CHURCH ACTIVITY

We believe that discipleship is a whole-church activity. This means we don’t silo off a special “discipleship ministry” separate from the rest of the life of the church. Instead, we want to leverage everything that we do, both formally and informally at Door of Hope, to contribute to the process of making and growing disciples. At our **Sunday gatherings**, a disciple will hear the word of God preached, worship through song and service, celebrate in community, and find opportunities to serve others in the community. Throughout the week, disciples will partner with Jesus in His Kingdom work by serving with **outreach partner** ministries, imaging Him to our city as we serve in His name. In **community groups**, disciples will experience and participate in the community of God. Leaders will grow as disciples through leading others into deeper relationship with Jesus, discussing and applying the scriptures, prayer, and serving together in the city with our various ministry partners. Oftentimes **smaller groups** will form out of community groups where a few men or a few women will meet up for accountability, in-depth Bible study, confession, reading good Christian books, etc. **Women’s and men’s events** gather people together for the purpose of building intentional community, as well. **Leader training events** will give strategic, focused training in key ministry skills or theology. Ideally, deep **spiritual friendships** will be forming around the community that spur one another on toward Christ-likeness. At **pastoral care meetings**, our elders, pastors, and other key leaders meet with individually to help other disciples process questions, decisions, or pain. And, of course, **individual devotional times** with God practicing the spiritual disciplines will spur a disciple on in his or her faith.

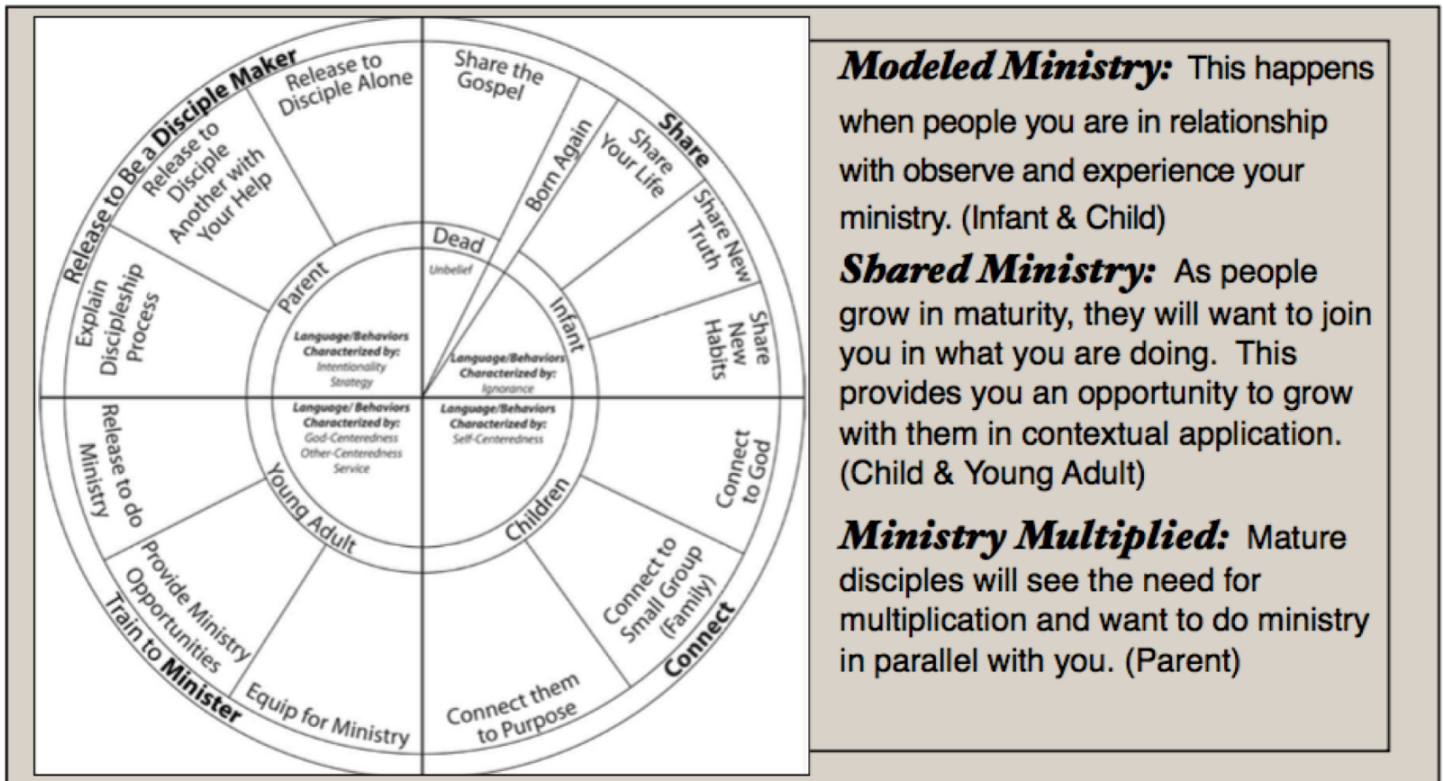
There are countless other things that happen around Door of Hope that play a part in the discipleship process. As leaders, we want to model a holistic commitment to the life of the church and faithfully shepherd the people God has placed under our leadership.

## DISCIPLESHIP AS AN INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Though discipleship is rightly thought of as a whole-church activity, still every disciple of Jesus is tasked with playing a part in helping make and grow other disciples. Not every maturing believer in Jesus will be involved in

the same ministry or play the same part in the disciple-making process, but each will be contributing to the great commission all the same. People become disciples of Jesus and grow through a holistic process. Take Community Group leadership for example--CGs are only a part of that process, but they are a unique and important part! Because of the relational structure, you have a unique opportunity to help people grow in profound ways. This structure must include humility, vulnerability, transparency, shepherding, modeling, and guided practice in doing ministry together. Discipleship does not happen by chance, so you will need to be intentional in these relationships.

The following chart describes typical stages in the spiritual life of a Christian, and the main things they need to continue growing at each stage. Use it to think through where the people in your sphere of influence are and how you can walk alongside them intentionally to help them grow:



**Modeled Ministry:** This happens when people you are in relationship with observe and experience your ministry. (Infant & Child)

**Shared Ministry:** As people grow in maturity, they will want to join you in what you are doing. This provides you an opportunity to grow with them in contextual application. (Child & Young Adult)

**Ministry Multiplied:** Mature disciples will see the need for multiplication and want to do ministry in parallel with you. (Parent)

\*Chart appears in *Real Life Discipleship* by Jim Putman

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**4 Marks of Biblical Discipleship** article by Trevin Wax - This short article argues for four key features of any discipleship process that is truly biblical: modeled, balanced, worldview-forming, and eschatological. (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/4-marks-of-biblical-discipleship/>)

**The Master Plan of Evangelism (2nd ed., abridged)** book by Robert Coleman - Coleman describes the method we see Jesus use in the gospel narratives for finding, training, empowering, and sending His co-laborers. It's a short read, but helpful for shoring up your own vision or for working through with people you're discipling.

**Real Life Discipleship** book by Jim Putman - A practical resource on discipleship on the individual and community group levels with the goal of training disciples who know how to make more disciples, this book offers simple, concrete concepts rooted in the Bible and practiced in a real church setting.

**Celebration of Discipline** book by Richard Foster - A new classic on the spiritual disciplines with inspiration for pursuing them and ideas for implementing them. He discusses meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance, and celebration.