



*Maturing and Equipping Christ's Followers through Life-on-life Missional Discipleship*

# Orientation

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## *Introducing Life-on-Life Missional Discipleship*

Welcome to *The Journey!*

Now is the time to put some traction to your interest in growing spiritually. No matter where you are in your own spiritual journey, *The Journey* will provide you with an opportunity for real, meaningful, life change through something called *life-on-life missional discipleship*. This orientation will introduce you to the life-on-life missional discipleship process and to *The Journey* material that supports it.

## **WHAT IS LIFE-ON-LIFE MISSIONAL DISCIPLESHIP?**

Life-on-life discipleship is a process for transferring spiritual life from one person (a Journey Group leader) to another in the context of small groups of 5 – 10 people (a Journey Group). Life-on-life missional discipleship can be described as:

- having a suitable life product;
- being intentional about imparting that product to others; and
- spending enough time doing the right things to impart that product so that the recipient will learn to impart it as well.

The life product that is valued in life-on-life discipleship is that of a mature and equipped follower of Christ. What exactly that means will be explained later. For now, just understand that your Journey Group leader is making a commitment to you. That commitment is to invest his or her life in yours, spending time with you working a specific plan that has your spiritual growth in mind. The end goal is that you will learn how, and be motivated, to impart your life product as well.

The context in which this happens is regular, weekly meetings with your Journey Group. These meetings have a relaxed, come-as-you-are atmosphere. Your Journey Group leader acts as a coach, guiding the group in creating a supportive, confidential environment that fosters camaraderie and openness. Group members encourage one another as they share honestly about the challenges they face and support one another through hard times as they grow spiritually.

## WHAT IT ISN'T

It's important to clarify what life-on-life missional discipleship is *not* because there are so many different approaches to spiritual growth that are sometimes labeled discipleship, but miss the mark.

- **Life-on-life missional discipleship is not curriculum-on-life.** We believe that discipleship happens because of relationships, not because of books or materials, so it is not primarily about pen, paper, reading, and studying. Although there is a learning component to discipleship, it is more focused on living and sharing truth, not merely learning it. Thus, *The Journey* is designed to support a life-on-life process of growth, not a curriculum-on-life process.
- **Life-on-life missional discipleship is not merely a person's Church activities and experience.** However, a disciple will certainly be active in Church.
- **Life-on-life missional discipleship is not merely about serving.** However, a disciple will certainly develop the heart and skills of a servant and put them in action.
- **Life-on-life missional discipleship is not only about mission.** Yet, a disciple will develop and pursue a specific life plan that is fruitful in mission.

## WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

Simply put, a disciple is a follower of Jesus Christ. S/he is growing in love for, and trust in, Christ. As a member of a Journey Group s/he will covenant together with the other group members to meet weekly for the purpose of growing toward spiritual maturity as a follower of Christ.

## WHAT IS SPIRITUAL MATURITY?

Spiritual maturity is the life product that life-on-life missional discipleship aims to impart. But, what is it? Again, it's important to clarify what it *isn't* because there are so many definitions that fall short.

- **Spiritual maturity is not just having a lot of Bible knowledge.** Although understanding the Bible is a significant factor that drives spiritual growth, simple head knowledge is not sufficient in itself. There is a difference between *knowing* and *living* God's word. Therefore, life-on-life missional discipleship is focused on applying God's truth, not merely understanding it.

- **Spiritual maturity is not merely having high commitment.** Commitment is an integral attribute of a spiritually mature life, but commitment, even combined with abundant biblical knowledge, doesn't equate to being a mature Christian.

So what is spiritual maturity? It involves having both the *spiritual life* and *spiritual skills* of a disciple; what we call being a *mature and equipped follower of Christ*. We define a mature and equipped follower of Christ as a person who:

- Lives consistently under the control of the Holy Spirit, the direction of the Word of God, and the motivation of the love of Christ
- Has discovered, developed and is using his/her spiritual gift(s)
- Has learned to effectively share his/her faith in both word and deed
- Gives strong evidence of being:
  - A faithful member of God's church
  - An effective manager of life, relationships and resources
  - A willing minister to others, especially "the least and lost", and
  - An available messenger to non-kingdom people.
- Demonstrates a life striving to be:
  - Gospel driven
  - Worship focused
  - Morally pure
  - Evangelistically bold
  - Discipleship grounded
  - Family faithful, and
  - Socially responsible

## WHAT IS *THE JOURNEY*?

*The Journey* is a 3-year collection of weekly materials, spanning roughly nine months of each year. Journey Groups use *The Journey* as a guide for life-on-life missional discipleship. Over the course of the material, group members will learn to apply the most significant lessons related to spiritual

growth, Biblical understanding, life management, relationships (including marriage), and spiritual skills. Since the material is designed to support the life-on-life model, the most important growth and learning will come from interactions with the leader and members of the Journey Group. It is recommended that each prospective disciple complete, "*How to Grow in Christ*," by Jack Kineer and read the Gospel of John before entering the discipleship process.

Each week, *The Journey* follows the **TEAMS** outline based upon the five essential ingredients that foster life change: **T**ruth, **E**quipping, **A**ccountability, **M**ission and **S**upplication.

- **Truth** is what God has revealed for His people to know, understand and obey. Truth is critical. However, finding, learning and knowing truth alone does not change lives. A disciple must also be shown how to implement what s/he knows, and to do so in the context of loving relationships.
- **Equipping** is massaging God's truth until it becomes understandable and usable. Not only does a person need to hear and learn truth, but s/he must also be shown how to use and apply the truth. This takes conversation and interaction with your Journey Group.
- **Accountability** is asking (or being asked) hard questions in order to promote godly living. Even though a person is equipped to apply truth, that doesn't mean s/he will do it. So, accountability questions are used to encourage each group member in their spiritual journey. This happens in the context of a proper understanding of the gospel to ensure that accountability doesn't devolve into behaviorism. The questions may move you a bit out of your comfort zone, but be assured that the goal is to support and help, not to shame.
- **Mission** is engaging with the lost world through word and deed with the intention of imparting the gospel. Mission enhances the hunger to put truth and equipping into use. Each week you will take small steps in learning to effectively relate to, and share the gospel with, those who are without Christ.
- **Supplication** is engaging in conversation with God. This will include praying with and for the other members of your Journey Group. Truth, equipping, accountability and mission must all be supported by prayer because ultimately, spiritual maturity and equipping is a result of God's work, and we must not presume that any material or process is *the* secret to spiritual growth.

## THE VALUE OF BEING IN A JOURNEY GROUP

Life-on-life missional discipleship is the most effective means of progressing toward spiritual maturity. This is the model Jesus used with his disciples. He spent time with them. It was interactive, 1-on-1, in small groups, and out in the field serving together. He took them as they were, with no pre-qualification except that they wanted to follow Him. Through life-on-life discipleship you can come as you are wherever you are in your spiritual journey and become what God has designed you to be, with nothing more required than your simple desire to follow Christ.

In addition to this, there is tremendous value in belonging to a brotherhood or sisterhood of believers. The bonds that are developed through life-on-life missional discipleship often reach beyond the 3-years of *The Journey*.

## DISCIPLESHIP AND GRACE

Does being involved in discipleship make God love you more? You may be tempted to think that God loves you and accepts you more because you've been memorizing verses, learning about the Bible, and even sharing your faith. But, don't believe it! Let's make it very clear that engaging in discipleship activities is *not* a means of earning God's favor. Being a Christian means that you've stopped trying to earn God's favor. Instead you follow Christ because you trust that He has earned God's favor for you. And remember that becoming a mature and equipped follower of Christ doesn't win you any more of God's love. Rather, God's love and grace gives you the freedom, power, and joyful motivation to follow Christ with all of your heart.

Through life-on-life missional discipleship you may well understand God's character and will better. You may even feel more intimate with him. But all this doesn't put you in a special class of God's favorites. His love is just as real (and just as undeserved) as when you are not involved in discipleship.

## ONE-YEAR COMMITMENT

So, are you willing to make a commitment to your spiritual growth? Here's what it will take.

Joining a Journey Group will take time – around two hours a week (outside of your personal worship time) plus your Journey Group meeting. You will find that the payoff from your investment of that time will be quite high as your life is steadily transformed.

*The Journey* is a three-year program based on weekly material and meetings from September to May each year. But Journey Group members are only asked to commit one year at a time. There is nothing magical about having a three-year plan. Practically speaking, it is short enough to be fully utilized, yet long enough to cover the abundance of subjects that need to be explored through the life-on-life experience. Life-on-life discipleship takes time. It cannot be done over a long weekend, nor can it be done well in a random fashion, so your commitment to regular weekly involvement is required.

At the end of your 1-year commitment you can tell your Journey Group leader whether you are interested in coming back the following year. Your leader then has the prerogative to invite you back or not, and will base this decision on your regularity of attendance, participation in the group, faithfulness in completing the assignments, and commitment to growing toward spiritual maturity and equipping. Some participants may experience different seasons of life that are not conducive to involvement in a Journey Group at that particular time. For such people, there is the freedom to withdraw from the group without criticism. If a group member consistently fails to live up to his or her commitments, s/he may be asked to discontinue during the discipleship year.

Joining a Journey Group also requires your willingness to move out of your comfort zone. Let's say you wanted to improve your physical condition. You might hire a personal trainer to move you out of your comfort zone by instructing you in good diet and exercise habits, and to help you stay disciplined. Your trainer shouldn't exercise you until you pass out, but s/he really wouldn't be doing their job if you weren't sore once in a while.

In a similar way, your Journey Group leader will help you develop a good spiritual diet by helping you cultivate the disciplines of prayer and Bible study. S/he will also coach you with spiritual exercises that might be uncomfortable at first, but will train and equip you to be involved in missional activities so that you can become an agent of change within the spheres of your influence where you live, work, and play.

Interested? Then turn the page and get started by making a note of your expectations and reservations on the next page. Then sign the Journey Group Member Covenant on the page following (an extra copy is included for you to keep).

Lastly, you will find a page that will help you think about your own spiritual journey up to this point. Your Journey Group leader will discuss this page with your group, so you don't need to write anything down yet. But, please be thinking about the significant turning points in your spiritual journey that have brought you to where you are right now.

## Expectations and Reservations

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

What do I expect to get from joining a Journey Group?

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What are my reservations and concerns about joining a Journey Group?

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What do I want God to do in my life through this Journey Group?

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## Journey Group Member Covenant

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*In order to glorify God by pursuing this opportunity to grow in spiritual maturity and equipping, I covenant together with this Journey Group and commit, with God's help to the following:*

\_\_\_\_\_ **To attend all meetings, unless providentially hindered.** If I am unable to attend, I will  
initial call my Journey Group leader as soon as possible, and take responsibility to find out what was missed in my absence. As much as my schedule lies within my control, I will arrange work and other commitments so as not to conflict with Journey Group meetings.

\_\_\_\_\_ **To be prompt in attendance.** I understand that this group will meet each \_\_\_\_\_  
initial from \_\_\_\_\_ until \_\_\_\_\_.  
Time Time Week day

\_\_\_\_\_ **To engage in daily personal worship.** This includes a commitment to spend time in prayer  
initial and Bible reading in order to grow in my relationship with God.

\_\_\_\_\_ **To complete all homework assignments to the best of my ability.** I understand that  
initial this will usually require about 2 hours per week, not including time spent in personal worship.

\_\_\_\_\_ **To participate in group discussion and activities.** I will be ready and willing to give an  
initial account of my spiritual progress on a weekly basis for the purpose of accountability for greater spiritual growth.

\_\_\_\_\_ **To protect the confidentiality of my group.** I pledge to keep whatever is shared in this  
initial group confidential so as to encourage trust, openness and honesty.

\_\_\_\_\_ **To pray for non-believers within my circle of influence** and to seek opportunities to win  
initial them to Christ through word and deed.

I understand that the term of this group is for one year.

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Signature

Date

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Signature

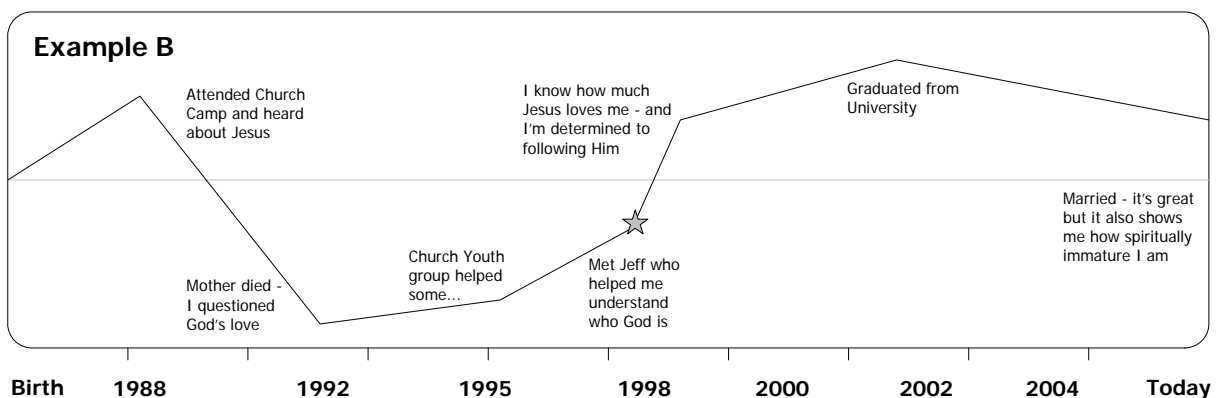
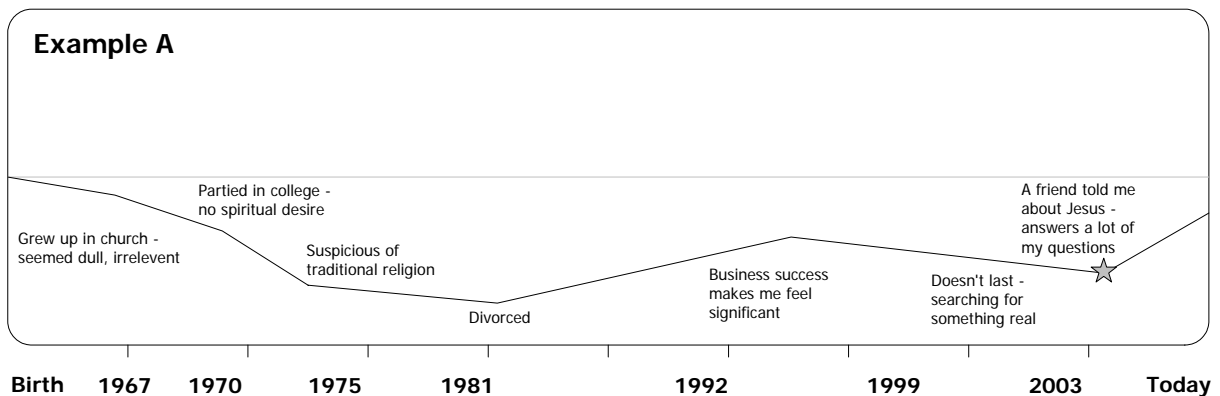
Date

## My Spiritual Journey So Far

Has it ever occurred to you that your life is a story in the making – a story that matters?

One of the foundational exercises of life-on-life discipleship is taking time to reflect on your life story up to this point; what we call your spiritual journey. This exercise is useful for helping you and your Journey Group understand where you're at right now, what drives you, and what matters to you. It may be a difficult exercise for you, but rest assured, you will see the value of it the moment you begin thinking about the significant events and patterns in your life. It could take you a few moments to complete, or a few weeks depending on how deeply you begin mulling over your life.

Here's how to do it. On the next page you're going to have an opportunity to draw a picture of your life story. You will be drawing a line graph that plots how you think about the twists and turns of your life story. At each turn in the road put a label. You can think of the labels as chapter titles in your life story. They can represent significant events, turning points, changes in your view of life, experiences, trials, or triumphs. What matters is that when you look at the picture, you recognize it as an honest representation of your spiritual journey so far. Place a star where you believe you became a true follower of Christ. A few examples are provided below. You can draw yours on the next page.



## My Spiritual Journey So Far

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Divide this timeline into segments that best represent your spiritual journey. Place a star where you believe you became a follower of Christ.

**Positive  
Spiritual  
Experiences**

**Negative  
Spiritual  
Experiences**

A large rectangular box with rounded corners, divided horizontally into two sections. The top section is labeled 'Positive Spiritual Experiences' and the bottom section is labeled 'Negative Spiritual Experiences'. The box has a horizontal line across its middle and a vertical line at the bottom. The bottom line has tick marks corresponding to the labels 'Birth' and 'Today'.

**Birth**

**Today**