

Thank you for downloading one of the eight, five-session small group studies from *Be Disciples*.

*Be Disciples* is a 40-week, video-driven small group study for men. Each session features a video from best-selling author, Rick Burgess, and a small group leader guide. You can purchase all 40 weeks, or purchase the eight, five-week sessions independently.

If we can help answer any questions about ***Be Disciples*** or any other of the Iron Hill Men resources, please don't hesitate to email ([customercare@ironhillpress.com](mailto:customercare@ironhillpress.com)) or call (800) 307-9366



# EMBRACING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

A 5-WEEK, VIDEO-DRIVEN DISCIPLESHIP  
CURRICULUM FOR MEN

**EMBRACING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY: A 5-WEEK, VIDEO-DRIVEN  
DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM FOR MEN**

Leader Guides

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Videos

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BY RICK BURGESS



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# DISCIPLESHIP MATTERS

## **DISCIPLE MEN, CHANGE EVERYTHING.**

There is a discipleship problem affecting Christian men today. Too often, men are absent from both the church pews and from the vital work the church is doing in the world. These men are not engaged spiritually in their homes and aren't making a Kingdom impact in their workplace. And it all points back to one major issue:

Many men aren't being disciplined.

But when men ARE being disciplined, powerful things happen as a result. They impact the church, their family, and culture. We have seen the influence godly men can have. The purpose of The Pursuit curriculum is to equip and empower men to become the man God has called them to be.

## **WHAT IS BE DISCIPLES ?**

Be Disciples is a 40-week, video-driven curriculum designed to help men discover what it means to be a disciple. Be Disciples takes eight traits of disciples from Scripture and unpacks them through video and small group Bible Study.

Rick Burgess, best-selling author and co-host of the nationally syndicated radio show The Rick & Bubba Show, starts off each session with a 10-15 minute video introducing the session's focus. Then, for each small group session, there is a leader guide to help facilitate a meaningful time of discussion and Bible study.

The reason men aren't living a more authentic faith is simple: they have yet to embrace the call to real discipleship. By leading a group through Be Disciples, you're a part of the growing tide of leaders who are looking to awaken men to embrace their calling as Christ-followers.

# STARTER GUIDE

As men seeking to be disciples, we are called to be devoted to one another, with a faithfulness that mirrors God's. We're called to commit to growing together in our knowledge of God, enjoying each other's fellowship, praying for one another, and meeting each other's needs. But we're also called to the difficult work of community.

As Christ-followers, we're called to hold each other accountable, not just for the sin in our lives but for righteousness, as well. We're called to bear each other's burdens, to selflessly put others above ourselves. Christian community is sometimes messy. (OK, Christian community is almost always messy.) But when we fail to embrace it because it's hard, we rob ourselves of the very framework God gave us to make it through this life together.

## **WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED**

**FIRST**, preview your video. Every Be Disciples session starts with a video. You'll need to preview your video ahead of time and be prepared to show it to your group. You can access your videos through your Iron Hill Press account.

**THEN**, get ready for your small group discussion and Bible study by preparing your lesson. Use this leader guide to help lead a time of discussion based on the video and Bible study based on the passage Rick covered. Pray that God would lead your preparation and your facilitation of the material.

**FINALLY**, lead your time of small group Bible study using this leader guide. It's that simple.

If you have any questions or feedback, don't hesitate to let us hear from you at [feedback@ironhillpress.com](mailto:feedback@ironhillpress.com).

# EDGE ELEMENTS

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



**RICK BURGESS** is the Co-Host of the nationally syndicated *Rick and Bubba Show*. He has co-authored multiple New York Times Bestselling Books covering topics such as politics, marriage, business, comedy, and what it looks like to be a follower of Christ in secular entertainment. Rick has appeared on the Fox News programs *Hannity's America*, *Your World with Neil Cavuto*, and *Fox and Friends*.

Rick speaks regularly at men's events and marriage conferences across the country, all while teaching youth and men's Bible studies on a weekly basis. Rick is married to the former Sherri Bodine, and they have five children: Brandi, Blake, Brooks, Brody, and Bronner. Rick's wife Sherri is the author of the book "Bronner: A Journey to Understand," a powerful story about what she and Rick learned about God through the earthly death of their youngest son, Bronner. Rick's eulogy for Bronner became the most-viewed video in the world on YouTube the week of the service.

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## ALSO CONTRIBUTING TO *BE DISCIPLES: EMBRACE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY*

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**Main Passage:** Matthew 18:20

**Supporting Passage:** Ephesians 4:1-3

**Purpose:** To understand the difference between fellowship and discipleship in the life of a disciple of Jesus.

**Session Snapshot:** As disciples, we are called to embrace Christian community with other believers. This session will explore the difference between fellowship and discipleship. Is your community drawing you closer to reconciliation with Jesus and others, or is your community indifferent to the Lord and just simply fellowship?

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## GETTING STARTED

*Kick off your time together by introducing a new theme.*

FIRST, explain to your group that they will be beginning a new video series that continues your look at one of eight different aspects of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. This particular series is called *Embracing Christian Community*. It will unpack the concept that we cannot truly be disciples of Christ without taking seriously God's expectation that we would live our lives as disciples among close, Christian friends. This 5-week study will guide men to understand exactly how this plays out in their daily lives.

If this is your first session as a group, consider introducing yourself, if necessary, and having the men in your group introduce themselves. If you want to pass around a contact sheet or do any other first-session "housekeeping tasks," this is the time to do it.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

## DIGGING IN

*Jump into the session by watching this week's video.*

FIRST, if this is your first Bible study time in the *Be Disciples* curriculum, explain to the group how your time together will work. Explain that you will watch a video that is usually about 15 minutes long, followed by a short discussion of the video. Then, you'll spend a few minutes in Bible study, followed by a closing activity. Consider encouraging men to take notes as they watch the video. (Remember, a participant guide is available to you if you would like to distribute it to your group.)

THEN, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

When the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **How many true friends would you say you have?**
- **When you look at the men you spend time with, do they bring you closer to Jesus or push you further away?**



- **What is the difference between fellowship and discipleship?**
- **When we talk about community within the context of discipleship, we are not talking exclusively about Bible study. How can men intentionally form a Christ-centered community outside the confines of Bible study?**
- **What does a Christ-centered community look like in real life?**
- **When you realize the community you're investing in is not bringing you closer to Jesus, what do you do?**
- **How do you foster relationships with the lost while investing in discipleship through Christ-centered community?**
- **If you are not in a Christ-centered community or know someone who isn't, how do you go about finding and implementing this aspect of discipleship?**

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **Now we will examine the scriptures a little further to see what we can learn about a community that leads to reconciliation.**

## **OPENING THE WORD**

*Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.*

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look at Matthew 18:20. This passage emphasizes the importance of unity and community among believers. The purpose of this verse is reconciliation. Embracing Christian community as disciples enables us to continually be reconciled to Jesus and each other.

We must make sure your people have a good understanding of the context of the passage you'll be studying. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** Matthew, a former tax collector, was a disciple of Jesus and a firsthand witness to the stories he relates in his Gospel.
- **Time frame:** Most people hold to Matthew's Gospel being written in the late A.D. 50s or 60s, though some think it was written after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.
- **Purpose:** Matthew wrote to a primarily Jewish audience to convince them that Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah. But he was probably aware of a Gentile audience, as his Gospel makes the case that the saving truth of Christ is for all nations.

THEN, read or have a volunteer read Matthew 18:15-20. Lead the group in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **What does verse 15 say we should do if a brother or sister is in sin?**
  - *Answer:* We should approach them privately and point out their fault.
- **What is the next step in verse 16?**
  - *Answer:* If they do not listen, take two people with you so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." Having the testimony of two or three witnesses is a quote from Deuteronomy 19:15, where Moses was establishing the Law for the Israelites.
- **Why was it important for Jesus to quote the Law here?**
  - *Answer:* Jesus' ministry was never intended to abolish the Law but to fulfill the Law. (Matthew 5:17)

- **Verse 17 states that if the person in sin still doesn't listen to the group of people brought as witnesses, the matter should be brought to the church. Why do you think this has to become a church matter?**
  - *Answer:* At this point in the process, it has become a matter of unrepentance and defiance to the community. There must be a spirit of repentance and reconciliation among a group of believers in Christ-centered community if there is going to be a spirit of unity.
- **What does Jesus say we should do if the person in sin refuses to listen to the church?**
  - *Answer:* Treat them as a pagan or tax collector.
- **What does the treatment of that person imply? Should these people be shunned and mistreated?**
  - *Answer:* They are no longer in fellowship with the community of believers and disciples. Of course, they should not be shunned, but they should not be considered in fellowship if they are not repentant. We should still love them in an effort to bring them to Christ and restoration.
- **Do you feel that this process is harsh or merciful? Why?**
  - Answers will vary.
- **What is the purpose of approaching a brother or sister who is in sin?**
  - *Answer:* The goal is to bring them to repentance and reconciliation with Jesus and the community of believers.
- **Verse 19 is Jesus emphasizing the importance of a Christ-centered community. Looking at this verse with the context of bringing a brother or sister to repentance and ultimately to discipline within the church, Jesus is reassuring the disciples that while this is a hard line to draw, if the people making the decision are agreeing in Jesus' name, Jesus will be there with them. Essentially, he says I support your decision because your heart is in the right place. Why would Jesus not want someone who is unrepentant to be part of the community of believers?**
  - *Answer:* Because we are called to live holy lives in community with others. Jesus calls us to repentance so we can be reconciled to Himself and each other.

FINALLY, have someone read Ephesians 4:1-3. In this passage, Paul emphasizes the importance of unity and community to the Church in Ephesus. Ask the following questions:

- **How does this passage help us understand Jesus' words in Matthew 18:15-20?**
  - *Answer:* The purpose of both passages is to bring unity within the community of believers. Both emphasize showing gentleness and patience with other believers. Both emphasize making every effort to bring peace to a situation.
- **As disciples of Jesus, we are to value and embrace Christian community because Jesus valued it and established ways to keep the community unified. What are the benefits of embracing Christian community? What are the dangers of dissension in Christian community?**
  - Answers will vary.

Ask if there are any questions and if there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

## ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

*Focus your group's attention on one key takeaway from your time together.*

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on one main takeaway from this session. Consider starting this portion of your session by asking your group what they think are the main application points from your session. Allow discussion to go until there are no more suggestions.

Then, if necessary, supplement your discussion with the following application points. Say something like:

- **Fellowshipping with other people is not always Christ-centered. But Christ-centered community doesn't always have to look like Bible study, either.**
  - What are ways that your community can be intentional about being Christ-centered?
  - What does the way we treat each other in a Christ-centered community look like?
  - How do you view outsiders in a Christ-centered community? How do they view your community?
- **God calls His followers to be peacemakers and embrace Christian community.**
  - What are ways that you can enhance your Christian community by being peacemakers?
- **The devil wants to destroy community. He wants to divide any Christ-centered community so that there will not be unity. We see this in churches, from large church bodies to small groups and Sunday school classes. If the devil can divide, he can destroy.**
  - As a disciple of Christ and a man of God, how can you be intentional about fighting this in your community?

FINALLY, encourage men to process these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them and respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.