

Appendix B | How to Be a Discipling Friend

Introduction

A literal translation of Jesus' words in Matthew 28:19 is, "Disciple all the nations." God intends for His spiritual family to love His newborn spiritual children and work with Him to disciple them until they are strong and able to disciple others. You have been discipled by someone using these **THRIVE** sessions. Now you can be a discipling friend to another new Christian using a new copy of these same sessions.

Part 1

God intends for His older children to receive new Christians as their own brothers and sisters (Luke 15:32). This includes:

- A. Celebrating with God the birth of new members of His eternal family (Acts 11:23).
- B. Receiving new believers in His name as members of the family whom God loves as much as the older family members (1 Thessalonians 2:7–11; 3:12).
- C. Being a friend who...
 - understands their past,
 - accepts them as they are,
 - sees the good in them, and
 - gently encourages them to grow.

Part 2

God's loving family helps His new children learn to walk with Him (Acts 14:21–23).

- A. Paul and his coworkers in Thessalonica...
 1. Prayed for the new Christians (1 Thessalonians 1:2–3; 3:9–13; 5:23).
 2. Helped them learn to walk with God (1 Thessalonians 2:7 to 3:13; 4:1–8).
 3. Helped them learn to love people (1 Thessalonians 4:6–12, 18; 5:11–15).
- B. Then the new believers willingly cooperated with their disciplers until they also became disciplers of new Christians (1 Thessalonians 1:6–10; 2:13–14; 4:1, 9–10).



Read 1 Thessalonians 1 through 5 to see the example set by discipling friends Paul, Silas, and Timothy as they cared for the Thessalonian church—and how the Thessalonian believers followed their example, in turn discipling others.

Part 3

Spiritual growth is best served by a discipling friendship between a more experienced spiritual brother or sister and a new Christian.

- A.** A discipling friend (discipler) is a guide for the new believer.
1. The discipler should explain that the sessions instruct the new believer to learn to walk with God.
 2. The discipler helps the new believer to personally experience God's presence and power while learning direct conversation with God through:
 - a. Studying His written Word and responding in prayer.
 - b. Hearing God speak while praying and through the day.
 3. The discipler should pray daily and diligently for the new believer's needs and growth.
 4. The discipler will receive from God the help he or she gives to others.
- B.** A discipling friend should encourage two-way communication by:
1. Being honest and open in conversation.
 2. Being a patient and attentive listener.
 3. Describing his or her own background and growing experiences to...
 - a. Help the new believer understand the growing process in Christian living.
 - b. Encourage the new believer to trust Jesus always.
 4. Arranging time to be with the new believer without a planned discussion, to allow friendship to grow. In this setting the new believer can talk about things that are on his or her mind and heart or ask questions. This will allow the discipler to better understand how well the new believer is grow-

ing spiritually or where he or she is struggling. “Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34).

5. Being alert to what God wants to teach him or her through the new believer, because God always works through fellowship between believers to benefit everyone involved.

Plan of Action | The Discipling Process

A. Disciplers need to be trained before they disciple new believers.

1. Disciplers should always work through each session themselves before discussing the material with a new believer. This will help the discipler to know the material well and to be able to help the new believer better understand God’s truth.
2. If possible, disciplers should discuss each session with another Christian or in a small group before discussing it with a new believer. This will help them explain things more clearly.
3. Disciplers should bring their completed sessions to the meeting with the new believer as notes for reference.

B. Disciplers need to know how to use the *THRIVE* sessions.


1. First meeting: Go through Session 1 with the new believer, assisting him or her to understand how to work through the material and to understand the truth and how it applies to everyday living. At the end of each meeting:
 - a. Explain and assign the daily time of study and prayer (quiet time) to be practiced until the next meeting between discipler and new believer.
 - b. Always take time to pray together without hurry, encouraging the new believer to talk to God as simply and naturally as if talking to another person. When you pray, use simple words so the new believer can learn how easy it is to pray by listening to you.
 - c. Arrange a regular weekly time to meet. Be faithful in meeting with new believers—even if they are not. Their spiritual life depends on it.
2. Second meeting: Go through Session 2 with the new believer, using the same activity format as with your first meeting. Give whatever help is

needed to find answers in God's Word, and discuss how those answers guide daily living. Review changes in the new believer's life, discuss their quiet-time experiences, and take turns praying. Turn to Session 3 in their handbook, and ask them to work through it on their own before your next meeting. Encourage new believers to give their best effort in completing the material but not to worry about any difficult parts. Assure them that when you meet, you will discuss and make clear the Bible's answers to the questions.

3. Third meeting: Discuss together the new believer's answers, questions, and other responses to Session 3. At the end of the meeting, give the new believer Session 4 to complete before the next meeting. Continue this process for the remaining sessions.

C. Disciplers should follow these guidelines for discipling others:

1. The sessions usually work best when used by one discipler with one new believer. If many new believers need to be disciplined, two or three can meet together with one discipler.
2. Contact the new believer at least once a week without a detailed plan for the conversation. This contact, by phone or in person, will let you check on how well the new believer is doing and will help your friendship grow.
3. Maintain a schedule for completing the sessions.
 - a. Meeting regularly is more important than completing an entire session at every meeting. Sometimes dealing with pressing needs in the new believer's life will require multiple meetings to finish a session.
 - b. If the new believer seems to be making a real effort to learn and grow, it is important to give him or her whatever time is necessary to understand and apply the truth to his or her life.

 Being a discipling friend actually begins with being a friend of sinners, as Jesus is. God wants us to rescue people from the fires of hell, but He also wants us to train (disciple) them to walk with Him in daily fellowship and obedience. An important part of their obeying God is for them to become discipling friends to others. Jesus said, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20). So be sure to teach the new believer to disciple others while you also keep discipling new Christians.