

IDENTIFYING, PARTNERING WITH PARENTS, AND STARTING DISCIPLESHIP

HOW DO I CHOOSE A STUDENT?

Helpful questions to consider when choosing a student for discipleship

Does the student have an evident saving faith or a soft heart to learn more about Jesus? Helping a student grow in a relationship with Jesus first requires the student to have a saving relationship with Jesus. Without the Holy Spirit, they will be unable to understand the things of The Word of God, which is the foundation of discipleship (1 Cor 2:10-14). The following verses may prove helpful when identifying fruits of salvation in a student's life: 1 John 4:7, Gal 5:22-24, Rom 10:9-10.

With that said, we still encourage you to consider students who also may have a soft heart towards Jesus. By soft heart we mean a student who you could see responding to the gospel within a short period of time together and be ready to take next steps in growing in a relationship with their Savior. Our discipleship curriculum begins with a deep dive into the gospel which lends itself both to the already saved and the non-believing student. If you get to a point in discipleship where you realize the student does not have a saving relationship with Jesus, then please talk with one of the student pastors or flock leaders for advice on how to move forward. We want to help you take next steps in upholding a gospel influence on the student's life while also transitioning your weekly/bi-weekly discipleship efforts towards another student.

Is the student committed to being discipled? Student's reveal where their commitment level is at with their feet. They may verbally express a desire for discipleship, but when it comes down to getting together, they may be flakey or not put effort into making it. If during the process of starting discipleship with a student you realize they are not committed, that's okay! Trust that this may be God leading you pursue another student who is committed and desiring to be discipled. Again, talk with one of the student pastors or flock leaders for advice at any point in this process. Please reach out to your flock leader or the student team if you need further help in this area.

HOW DO I PARTNER WITH THE PARENTS?

Helpful tips when partnering with parents before and during discipleship

If you are not familiar with the student's family life, either ask the student or connect with the student ministry team to glean important background information. Questions that may be helpful to know about are: what is the student's relationship with their parents? Are their parents Christians or not? Are their parents divorced? Understanding the student's family structure will help you in the initial conversation with the parents. In

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cases where you aren't sure if a parent will be on board with you discipling their student (i.e., a non-Christian parent is against the idea, but the student desires it), please reach out to a student pastor or flock leader for advice.

Remember to ask for permission from the student's parents to disciple their student. If possible, talk with the parents in person. If that doesn't work, then a phone call works great! The student ministry team can provide you with parent contact information if needed. For MSM students, this step should be done before approaching the student. For HSM students, this step may be done after having an initial conversation with the student. In the initial conversation with the parents, share the following:

- Explain what discipleship with their son/daughter would look like. Discuss the purpose of discipleship, the time commitment (How often? For how long?) and emphasize your desire to partner with them as the primary discipler in investing in their son/daughter's relationship with Jesus.
- Communicate the benefit of discipleship. Your hope is to see their student grow in love for Jesus, deepen their understanding of God's Word, and become a disciple maker themselves.

Once discipleship begins, make it a goal to send the parents a discipleship update email every 2-3 months. The goal of your email is not to divulge personal struggles or private conversations with their son/daughter, but to share with them how they can partner with what God is doing in their son/daughter's life. In your email, add the following:

- How you have seen God at work in their son/daughter's life. This may be the most encouraging thing to hear/know about as a parent.
- Recent discipleship topics covered and questions they as parents can ask their son/daughter in light of your recent discipleship discussions to further biblical truths in the student's while heart at home.
- Ways they can pray for their son/daughter.
- Let them know you are available to them as parents for questions or to reach out to anytime.
- Also, before starting discipleship, ask the parents if there's any topics, they would prefer you don't discuss with their son/daughter for the time being (i.e. personal purity) out of respect to them.

If a parent does reach out and share info about their student with you, make sure you are careful not to compromise trust with the student by saying something like, "hey Jimmy, your parent told me _____ was going on in your life...how can I help?". This may result in a loss of trust with the student as they may feel like you are telling their parents everything, they share with you in confidentiality. We encourage you to only use information parents share with you as a way to shepherd their son/daughter more

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effectively as you allow them to open up to you about their life in their own time. If you find that a parent is seeking details from you that would breach your confidentiality, please talk to the student ministry team for advice on how to move forward with the parents. The only information you should *always* lovingly disclose to parents despite confidentiality are issues of legality and or life-threatening matters.

Lastly, look for opportunities throughout discipleship to establish relational trust and connection points with the parents. This may look like finding them on a Sunday morning and sparking up small conversations together to allow them space to get to know you better.

HOW DO I ASK THE STUDENT?

Tips for inviting a student into discipleship

Invite the student into discipleship with you in person. The following points may be helpful in the initial conversation:

- Share why you desire to disciple them by highlight how you've seen God at work in their heart and how you want to help foster that in discipleship.
- Explain what discipleship would look like with them and the purpose/benefit of it in their life.

End the conversation by asking them to prayerfully consider stepping into discipleship with you before coming back to you and committing to it. Give them a reasonable timeline of when you want to hear back from them on their decision (one week is usually enough time). You may even need to circle back around to them. Allowing the student some time to think about it will only benefit your assurance of their genuine commitment to moving forward. If the student loses desire and doesn't end up committing, that's okay! Again, trust that God may be using that to direct you towards another student.

Once the student is commitment, establish a regular day/time of the week to meet for discipleship. Do your best to have the student take ownership of coordinating schedule/rides with their parents to instill a sense of responsibility on their part (applicable mainly to students without a car). At times, it is helpful to still touch base with the parents when scheduling with their son/daughter.

Finally, "go and make disciples of all nations"!