

# Growing Disciples

## What is a Disciple?

### Discipleship in the Bible

In the Bible, a disciple is someone who follows Jesus and learns from him through a lifelong relationship. It's less like studying in a classroom and more like apprenticing under a master, learning how to live with faith. Jesus invited many to follow him; beyond the twelve, there were the 72 and several women who supported and learned from him. Discipleship means staying close to Jesus and letting that relationship shape your life.

### Core Elements of Discipleship

- **Recognizing & Responding to God's Voice** – A disciple can hear and recognize the voice of Jesus. We hear Jesus in Scripture and in prayer, when we're alone and when we're with friends, when we're asking him to speak and, at times, when we least expect him.
- **Transformed for Mission** – God's purpose for the world, and for his followers, is not just salvation but transformation. A disciple doesn't just hear Jesus' voice; a disciple responds to Jesus' voice with active obedience. Hearing and responding go together.
- **Relational Foundation** – The most effective discipleship is done person-to-person. This follows the model of Jesus, who invited a focused group of disciples to learn about God and his kingdom through firsthand, everyday experiences.

#### REFLECT

How are you personally and currently growing as a disciple? How is God transforming you right now?

## The Discipleship Cycle

### Overview of the Discipleship Cycle

For many years, we've seen students and faculty grow by regularly, purposefully walking through the steps in a framework we call the Discipleship Cycle (D-Cycle).

1. **Hear the Word** – The first step of the D-Cycle involves hearing God's Word through reading Scripture, in prayer or a sermon, or through a challenge (among other ways, depending on a student's cultural background or spiritual temperament). It can also start with being attentive to where the Holy Spirit is inviting some step of faith (e.g., to share the gospel with a specific person or to reach out to a new corner of campus).
2. **Respond Actively** – People generally learn best through concrete experiences and active experimentation. In discipleship, there's no substitute for following the commands of Jesus.
3. **Debrief & Interpret** – After responding obediently, take time to reflect on the experience. This may happen in a formal meeting with your chapter after an outreach event, for example, but it can also be a quick conversation over a video call, talking through what happened and possible next steps.



## The Discipleship Cycle in Action

Here's an example of how D-Cycles can play out on campus. You are meeting one-on-one with a student, Elisa, and studying the Gospel of Mark together.

1. **Hear the Word** – As you read and pray, you ask Elisa to notice if she feels led or convicted by the Spirit. She mentions that she feels a strong burden to share the gospel with one of her friends, Ruth.
2. **Respond Actively** – With your encouragement and help setting up an action plan, Elisa commits to doing this in the coming week.
3. **Debrief & Interpret** – The next time you meet, you ask Elisa to share how her conversation with Ruth went, what she felt and learned, and if God has a further invitation for her as a result.

### REFLECT

What step of the D-Cycle comes most naturally to you? Which step is more of a challenge?

- If it's **hearing the word**, ask God to give you a longing to hear from him. Honestly ask yourself if you're giving him enough time and space to speak into your life.
- If it's **responding actively**, ask God to give you a conviction to follow his Word, the clarity to see tangible next steps, and the courage to act. If there's something God's already been calling you to do, which you may be afraid of doing, take time to pray and reflect with others. How can you take this step of obedience?
- If it's **debriefing and interpreting**, be intentional about setting aside time to do this. Add a reminder to your phone. Keep a journal to help you reflect.

## Related Resources

- [D-Cycle Collection](#)
- [D-Cycle in Action: Pancake Outreach](#)

## Recommended Courses

- [Sharing the Gospel](#)
- [Ministering Across Cultures](#)
- [Building Your Own Bible Study](#)

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