



▲▲▲▲ NEXT STEPS

INTRODUCTION: WHERE DO I START?



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Next Steps

Welcome to Next Steps. We believe that anyone pursuing a relationship with Jesus is embarking on a journey. Like any other journey, it begins with deciding which path to pick and where to take the first step. Put simply, the question most people ask is, "Where do I start?" For many, deciding where to start can feel like the most challenging piece of the journey. Pick the wrong path, and one could find oneself alone, discouraged, lost, unsure, or wanting to turn back. However, the success of a journey drastically increases when one has a guide to lead them through it. One can think similarly of the journey that one takes in following Jesus. Learning where to begin, or even picking a path to continue, can feel daunting, but there is much assurance in having someone to guide you through the process and lead from their own experience.

Matthew 28:19-20

"THEREFORE GO AND MAKE
DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS,
BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF
THE FATHER AND OF THE SON
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND
TEACHING THEM TO OBEY
EVERYTHING I HAVE
COMMANDED YOU. AND
SURELY I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS,
TO THE VERY END OF THE AGE."





DISCIPLES OF JESUS



Next Steps is a systematic approach to discipleship that seeks to help followers of Jesus find their next step. Discipleship is one person following the teaching, examples, and goals of another in hopes of becoming like their guide. In the church, our ultimate guide is Jesus, and we want to guide others into becoming more like Christ by multiplying ourselves. The Biblical example is in Matthew 28:19-20. We find that we are to live lives that model our ultimate guide, Jesus, and we then teach and exemplify his life to others through intentional discipleship relationships.

At OceanPointe, we offer three main experiences to interact with God and his people. The first is our Sunday morning worship experiences. On Sundays, the purpose is for someone to attend or serve in a manner that refills the individual for the week so that they can go and pour into others who do not know Jesus. The second experience we offer is small groups or just "Groups." The purpose of our small groups is to give someone a small community of 10-12 people who care about them and desire to do life with them. While these experiences will continue to foster growth, they are not what we at OceanPointe would define as intentional discipleship relationships.

FOLLOW OUR
ULTIMATE GUIDE *Jesus*

Discipleship groups, or D-Groups, are independent from these experiences and consist of gatherings of 2-4 people. D-groups aim to create an environment where people sharpen others by looking more like Jesus. It establishes the presence of a guide who has been following Jesus and models a life that resembles Christ. It then connects that guide to 1-3 others who desire to grow in a deeper and more intentional environment. Because of how these groups are structured, the people somebody steps into a D-Group with can become their closest friends because of these three core guidelines.

CORE GUIDELINES

>> SHOW UP

If a participant is unwilling to attend their D-Group sessions, then there is no environment for them to grow. So, the participant must understand that being a part of this group is a commitment for them to show up.

>> PUT IN THE WORK

In comparison, small groups and Sunday morning services allow people to attend and not participate if they choose not to. D-groups do not give people that option. We believe that growth in Jesus takes effort. Therefore, we put rhythms and work in place to help someone grow. But growing involves growing pains, so one must embrace the sweat.

>> BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF & OTHERS

Next Steps designs itself to exist within a small community that one trusts. These rhythms help get at the heart of who one believes they are and who they believe God to be. Participation in a D-group takes honesty and vulnerability. So, agreeing to be in a D-group means deciding to open up about what they think and feel.

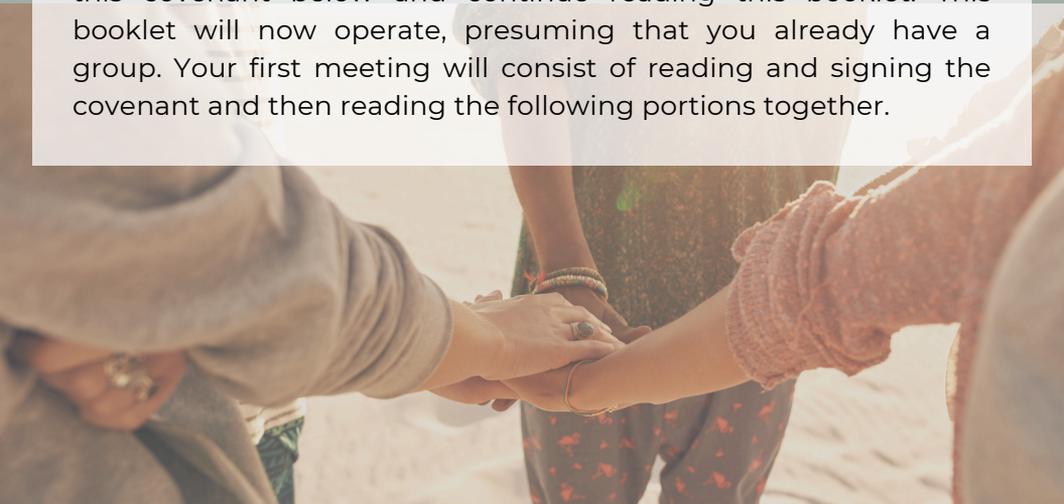




YOUR NEXT STEP

Maybe you, the reader, feel like you are modeling a life that guides others to Jesus. You have picked up this booklet because you are ready to find intentional discipleship relationships but have no idea what that means or what it looks like. Next Steps will give you the tools and training to establish a framework for what it means to foster and facilitate meaningful discipleship relationships. Maybe you are just looking for your next step of faith and are unsure what that looks like. Next Steps will connect you to the areas of your life that urge growth and connect you with the people to guide you through that journey. Whichever you may be, if you are looking to embark on a life-giving, transformational, perspective-shifting journey, and you want others to embark on it with you, then Next Steps is what you have been looking for.

What is your next step on this journey? Your next step is to find your D-group of 2-4 people. We encourage same-sex groups because of the nature of vulnerability and authenticity that this intentional discipleship relationship produces. If you do not have people in mind and are interested in guiding or participating, contact our Discipleship Pastor, Isaac Lankford, at Isaac@oceanpointeri.com. He will be able to connect you with a potential D-group. After you have found this group, you will all sign this covenant below and continue reading this booklet. This booklet will now operate, presuming that you already have a group. Your first meeting will consist of reading and signing the covenant and then reading the following portions together.



COVENANT

The purpose of this covenant is to state clearly and upfront the expectations in your d-group relationship with each other. As you begin, review the following covenantal elements. Share in your own words how you understand this commitment. If there are additional covenantal agreements that you think would benefit the group, you may add them if everyone else agrees to the terms.

>> I will complete the work before each meeting by answering all the questions to the best of my ability.

>>I will ask questions about things I do not understand and not let my confusion be an excuse for why I did not do something.

>> I will make every effort to be present for all of our meetings to complete the entire study.

>>I will keep strict confidence so that what others share stays in the group without exception.

>>I will adopt an attitude of open-mindedness and be willing to consider that my understanding of who God always has room to grow. Put simply, I am not an expert on the mind and ways of God, and I will not act as such.

>> I will be open and willing to follow wherever God leads in this time of study and action.

In the presence of my friends and fellow disciples, I commit myself to completing the first step of my discipleship journey by fulfilling the above covenant.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____



WELCOME TO NEXT STEPS

Now that we have established the goal of this journey of discipleship, how do we look more like Jesus, and how is that accomplished within a Discipleship Group? Romans 12:1-2 reveals two critical attributes in becoming more like Jesus.

FIRST, there is a thinking aspect. Paul describes this thinking aspect as “the renewal of the mind.”

SECOND, there is a doing aspect. Paul describes this doing aspect as “offering your body as a living sacrifice.”

These aspects (thinking and doing) work together to create Spiritual Formation. Spiritual Formation is where the Holy Spirit, one of the person(s) of God, molds us like clay into someone who looks like Jesus. In your time working through Next Steps together, we will establish relational rhythms of thinking true thoughts about who God is so that we can grow in expressing our trust in him more. Let's break this down.

Romans 12:1-2

THEREFORE, I URGE YOU, BROTHERS AND SISTERS, IN VIEW OF GOD'S MERCY, TO OFFER YOUR BODIES AS A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY AND PLEASING TO GOD—THIS IS YOUR TRUE AND PROPER WORSHIP. DO NOT CONFORM TO THE PATTERN OF THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND. THEN YOU WILL BE ABLE TO TEST AND APPROVE WHAT GOD'S WILL IS—HIS GOOD, PLEASING AND PERFECT WILL.



ESTABLISH RELATIONAL RHYTHMS



1 Corinthians 4:15 identifies a problem that churches can fall into. There are people who teach us on Sunday mornings through preaching sermons, but no spiritual “Parents” who will intentionally guide, teach, and train people to look more like Jesus. This potential lack of intentionality is why we make disciples through relationships. 1 Corinthians 4:16-17 addresses this problem by providing a solution. That someone who is trying to live like Jesus teaches others, like a parent to a child, how they also should live like Jesus. So, let’s recap and summarize what we have covered.

WHAT QUALIFIES THOSE PARTICIPATING IN D-GROUPS?

A willingness to participate and a teachable spirit coming from a desire to grow.

WHAT QUALIFIES THOSE LEADING D-GROUPS?

Your intentional and ongoing pursuit of Jesus.

HOW WILL THESE WORK TOGETHER?

By establishing relational rhythms.



RELATIONAL RHYTHMS

In a set weekly meeting time, you will accomplish these six steps:

STEP 1: OPEN WITH PRAYER

Allow God to guide your time and words that you may be sharpened and transformed.

STEP 2 : CHECK IN

Ask the following questions,

1. What are you coming into the conversation with today? Any anxiety or outer pressures that might hinder focus on the conversation?
2. Are there any unresolved confessions that you want/need to share with your D-group?

STEP 3: OBSERVE

Whether you are utilizing Next Steps material or other resources, ask the questions that go in tandem with whatever material you cover. You can open with these general observation questions as well:

1. What was something you'll remember one month from now?
2. What was something you loved or agreed with?
3. What was something you disagreed with?
4. What was something you never heard before?
5. What was something that convicted you?
6. What was something you did not understand?

STEP 4: MEDITATE

Cover the first rhythm that you established within the Next Steps.
What was something true that you learned about God or who God says you are?

STEP 5: APPLY

Cover the second rhythm that you established of Next Steps.

What is one way that you will express trust in God coming out of this week's study?

STEP 6: CONCLUDE IN PRAYER

Do one final prayer request check and then pray for your D-Group.

Discipleship Group

THIS IS NOT A COMMUNITY GROUP,
THOUGH YOU WILL GROW IN
YOUR COMMUNITY.

THIS IS NOT AN ACCOUNTABILITY GROUP,
THOUGH YOU WILL DISCUSS SIN
AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

THIS IS NOT A BIBLE STUDY GROUP,
THOUGH YOU WILL BE STUDYING WHAT
THE BIBLE SAYS AND HOW TO
APPLY IT TO YOUR LIFE.

THIS IS NOT A PRAYER GROUP,
THOUGH YOU WILL BE PRAYING
FOR EACH OTHER.

THIS IS NOT A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES GROUP,
THOUGH YOU WILL BE PARTICIPATING IN
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE.

THIS IS A DISCIPLESHIP GROUP. IT
EMPHASIZES UTILIZING ALL OF THESE
THINGS TO FORM YOURSELF INTO
SOMEONE WHO LOOKS LIKE JESUS

1 CORINTHIANS 4:15–17

EVEN IF YOU HAD
TEN THOUSAND
GUARDIANS IN
CHRIST, YOU DO
NOT HAVE MANY
FATHERS, FOR IN
CHRIST JESUS I
BECAME YOUR
FATHER THROUGH
THE GOSPEL.
THEREFORE I URGE
YOU TO IMITATE
ME. FOR THIS
REASON I HAVE
SENT TO YOU
TIMOTHY, MY SON
WHOM I LOVE,
WHO IS FAITHFUL
IN THE LORD. HE
WILL REMIND YOU
OF MY WAY OF
LIFE IN CHRIST
JESUS, WHICH
AGREES WITH
WHAT I TEACH
EVERYWHERE IN
EVERY CHURCH.



FIRST RHYTHM: THINKING

Thinking true thoughts about who God is

Thinking is the first rhythm that our D-Group will establish. To transform our hearts into something that looks like Jesus, we have to get into a rhythm of thinking true thoughts about who God is. Every week, you will have Scripture verses, book chapters, videos, or songs to listen to that give you opportunities to think. You will learn core aspects of who God says He is, and from that understanding, you will learn more about who He designed you to be. As you go through these studies, there will be sections within your booklet that allow you to write down true things that you either learned or remembered about who God is. That's it. All we are asking you to do within these D-Groups is commit to thinking true thoughts and then sharing them with your group.

WHO GOD IS



TRUTH



But what is truth? We believe that we find truth within the written word of God that we call the Bible. God reveals true things about Himself within the Bible, and when we study these true things, it causes growth in our lives. Whether you agree with this or not, we hope that you will commit to being open-minded to what you could potentially learn about the God of the Bible. No finite person can indeed be an expert on an infinite God. There will always be untrue things about God that we bring to the group. Being open-minded also means being willing to submit potentially untrue things about God that you may have previously understood. To combat these false things we may bring to the group, we will use Scripture and resources rooted in Scripture to convey what we believe is truth. Specifically, the truth about who God says He is and who He says we are. When we think of these true things, it guides us to our second rhythm.



WHO GOD
SAYS WE ARE



SECOND RHYTHM: DOING

Growing in expressing your trust in God

Expressing trust is the second rhythm D-Groups establish. When we learn true things about God, we understand that God is trustworthy. Our natural response to this is to express that trust in Him. This expression is the “doing” action we talked about earlier. Throughout the weeks, you will not only write down true things you learned about God, but you will also show that belief through doing something that demonstrates trust in God. Trust, also called faith, is an essential part of following Jesus. You cannot trust someone that you do not know. Likewise, you cannot fully know someone who proves trustworthy and not express trust in them. Therefore, we have to establish a think AND DO rhythm. God proves Himself trustworthy through our thinking, so we must do by expressing our trust in Him.

ESTABLISH A RHYTHM



Think & Do

In Genesis chapter 3, we see the story of the first sin of Adam and Eve. The first thing the serpent said to them in this story is, "Did God really say..." What this shows us is that all sin and rebellion that goes against God is rooted in a lack of trust in who God is. What this tells us is that the foundation of who we are, and the foundation of the areas in which we need to grow, is rooted in the areas of our lives that we do not trust God. Therefore, we need to examine the areas in our lives where we struggle to trust God. These areas could include your time, emotions, money, sin, gifts, and relationships. But how do we do that? We must begin by evaluating these areas where we struggle to trust by answering questions about these specific areas.



Where do you struggle to trust God?





GETTING STARTED



Now that we have established the relational rhythms of thinking and doing, how do you start your first D-Group meeting? The first thing you will do with your D-Group when you meet is work through the provided questions on the next couple of pages. Allow this to be a time when you get to know one another. Feel free to laugh and have fun but don't be afraid to be honest with these people. Not only is this an opportunity to grow in your trust in God, but it is an opportunity to grow in your trust in His people. So be honest and vulnerable with your answers to these questions. Know that there is no "right" answer, nor is there a "wrong" answer. But the honest answer is best.

A TIME TO GROW IN YOUR TRUST

in God & His people

GROUP DISCUSSION

- QUESTIONS -

Work through these questions as a group. They are placed categorically within the Next Steps booklets that we have available. We designed the questions to help you assess the understanding that you have of these topics and the amount of trust that you have in God with them. These questions are the fastest way to discern where your group should begin. Some people have an excellent grasp of prayer and have a thriving prayer life, but they have little understanding of how to read their Bible. Therefore, a great place to begin will be with How to Read the Bible. But this changes with each group. So, we need to be able to listen, pray for discernment, and help assess the growth areas to focus on. This D-Group could be an all-encompassing discipleship process where you work through each region of spiritual growth. This D-group can also be a “choose your own adventure” where you focus on the most prominent areas of need. Whatever you choose, remember that the goal of discipleship is not arriving somewhere spiritually. There is no end goal of discipleship but rather the continual process of growing to look like Jesus. No matter how long your journey, we believe that there is always a next step..



Discipleship

CONTINUAL

PROCESS OF

GROWING

TO LOOK

LIKE JESUS.



QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- What does it mean to trust someone or something?
- How easy or difficult is it for you to trust God?
- What are areas in your life that you find difficult to trust God?

GOSPEL-CENTERED

- What does being made in God's image mean to you?
- What is the Gospel in your own words?
- What does Jesus dying on the cross accomplish?
- Why is it essential that he rose from the dead?
- How do we receive salvation?
- Why is baptism necessary?

PRAYER

- How often do you pray?
- What is the hardest thing about prayer?
- Who do you pray to?
- What happens when we pray?
- What is the purpose of praying, and what does it accomplish?
- Do you believe that prayer works and does what it's supposed to do?

BIBLE STUDY

- How often do you read your Bible?
- What percentage of the Bible do you think you have read?
- What percentage of the Bible do you think you understand?
- What is the purpose of the Bible?
- How does God speak to people?
- Who is God?

SIN

- What is sin, and how would you define it?
- What happens when we sin?
- Do you think it is possible never to sin anymore?
- What do you think God thinks about sin?
- What do you think God thinks about us when we sin?
- Why is it important to try not to sin if Jesus died on the cross?

RELATIONSHIPS

- Why is attending church necessary? Or is it not important?
- What does a good and healthy friendship look like?
- Who is your best friend, and why are they your best friend?
- What does God say about friendship? Does he think it's important?

HOLY SPIRIT/GIFTINGS

- Who is the Holy Spirit?
- What does it mean to have the Holy Spirit? Does this impact anything about a person?
- What is a spiritual gift?
- Do you believe that you have a spiritual gift? If so, what is it?
- Do you think that some gifts are more important than others?
- What is the purpose of having spiritual gifts?

NEXT STEPS

From here, there are Next Step booklets that you can pick from to move on with your group. If you are unsure, a great one to start with is “What is the Gospel?” This study lays a solid foundation for what it means to follow Jesus and helps establish the core of our faith. Please feel free to continue with whatever the following booklet may be, and do not forget to check the Next Steps portions of each of them upon completing each one. This portion provides the transition to the next leg of studying that you will do with your group.

How long are you supposed to continue in this group? The best time to shift the relationship between a guide and a disciple is when the guide feels that the

disciple is ready to disciple someone else. At that point, we recommend that you shift from a weekly meeting to a meeting every 4-6 weeks to check how they are doing. When you feel someone is ready to disciple others, please send them to our Discipleship Pastor, Isaac Lankford. You can reach him at Isaac@oceanpointeri.com. He will have the Next Steps and the training for them.

If you finish the provided material within the Next Steps curriculum but you wish to continue your D-Group, the following section includes other resources to consider.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS TO PURCHASE

- Echoes of Exodus by Alastair J. Roberts and Andrew Wilson
- Good and Beautiful God by James Bryant Smith
- Good and Beautiful Life by James Bryant Smith
- Good and Beautiful You by James Bryant Smith
- Good and Beautiful Community by James Bryant Smith
- Ruthless Elimination of Hurry by John Mark Comer
- Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Peter Sczerro
- Invitation to a Journey by M. Robert Mulholland Jr.
- Discipleship Essentials by Greg Ogden
- Renovation of the Heart by Dallas Willard
- With by Skai Jethani
- Gentle and Lowly by Dane C. Ortland
- The Cure by Trueface, Bruce McNichol, Bill Thrall, John Lynch

RIGHT NOW MEDIA (RIGHTNOWMEDIA.ORG)

- The Gospel of Mark by Francis Chan
- The Gospel of John by Tony Evans
- The Book of Romans by J.D. Greear
- The Book of Galatians by Kyle Idleman
- The Book of Ephesians by J.D. Greear
- The Book of Philippians by Jo Saxon
- The Book of Colossians by Louie Giglio
- The Book of Hebrews by Derwin Grey
- The Book of Job by Francis Chan
- The Book of Jonah by Eric Mason

PODCASTS

- The Bible Project by Tim Mackie: A podcast with a variety of series for your D-Group to go through.
- Pray the Word by David Platt

OTHER RESOURCES

- Read Scripture App by The Bible Project
- Practicing The Way by John Mark Comer (practicingtheway.org)





NEXT STEPS