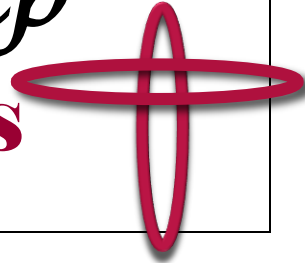


Discipleship **Partners**



*Christ-centered Relationships
That Help Us Grow*

***A Personal Bible Study and Prayer Journal to Help You
Discover the Bible for Yourself***

Notes and Comments by John Sullivan

Discipleship Partners

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Rock Island, IL
www.d4yp.com

NOTE TO E-BOOK READERS:

The printed journal, unlike this e-book version, has pages for notes.

You might want to use your own journal, either physical or electronic, because there is a lot of writing recommended in this study.

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*A new command I give you: Love one another.
As I have loved you, so you must love one another.
By this all men will know that you are my disciples,
if you love one another.*

John 13:34 – 35

Introduction

*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
To him be glory both now and forever! Amen*

2 Peter 3:18

God wants for us what we all want: to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. We can never know too much about God's amazing grace or ever stop wanting to know Jesus better. Jesus came full of grace **and** truth (**John 1:14**). Satan has used his lies to distort both of these. That's why we want to keep growing. As disciple followers of Jesus, we want to be full of grace and truth also.

The singular point of this journal is that having another disciple as a partner is a great help in our growth. True, we can survive without a human partner, because, after all, we have Christ in us. He has given us his Scriptures and his Holy Spirit. But he has also given us relationships. Of course, relationships that are not full of grace and truth may not be healthy relationships. But truly Christ-centered relationships are amazing. We can actually help each other grow!

The emphasis in this journal will be on the practical side of relationships. Of the many concepts that go along with helping one another in our growth, only four will be highlighted in this study:

- praying for and sharing Scriptures with one another;
- being accountable for one another;
- making disciples together;
- being friends.

There is a recommended reading list of very helpful books on this subject on p. 34, which can help you dig more deeply into other aspects of this subject. For now, we will spend two weeks on each of these four topics. We will study and meditate on the Scriptures during our daily personal Bible study times. And then we will all (including me) be encouraged to put them into practice with our discipleship partners during that two-week period.

As a simple definition, for the purposes of this journal, a *discipleship partner* is another disciple of Jesus Christ that you have a relationship with for the purpose of helping each other grow in your discipleship. Together, you put into practice (among other things) the four principles listed above. It might be a disciple who has more experience than you and is mentoring you in the faith. Or it might be someone who is newer in the faith whom you are mentoring. Or you could both be in similar situations and you are equally discipling one another.

(continued on the next page)

Of course, you might have more than one discipleship partner, from more than one of the above categories. In any of these situations, the goal is to help each other grow. But, while we do not want to dictate or force this upon anyone, it is hoped that every disciple has at least one person in his/her life in order to enjoy and experience these principles.

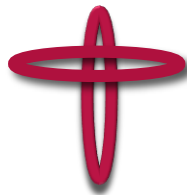
If you do not have a discipleship partner, or are not sure who it is, please talk to your church leaders about that. While we don't prescribe or dictate who your discipleship partner is, the shepherds and family group leaders of the church probably have in mind someone who will be a good fit for you.

One thought to consider throughout the study about these Christ-centered relationships: the Scriptures are very clear about WHAT principles God wants to see in our relationships, but HOW we put those principles into practice is not dictated by Scripture. We want to and need to obey the biblical principles about relationships – there is no choice about that, if we claim to be disciples of Christ. But there may be many different ways to put those principles into practice. For instance, the Bible is very clear that we need to pray for one another, confess sin to one another, make other disciples, etc. But there is no verse in the Bible that says “you must have a discipleship partner to make sure you are doing these things.” I personally know of no better way to implement the “one another” principles found so often in Scripture than the use of discipleship partners, but there is plenty of room for differences of opinion on that.

Finally, let me encourage you to NOT make a list of rules out of these principles. God wants our relationships to be a help for each other, not a burden of rules and regulations. Resist the temptation of the “check-list” mentality. These are general principles that describe your overall relationship – not a list of regulations that drag you down. Always stay focused (as Jesus was) on both grace and truth. The scriptural principles are certainly the truth. But they always provide the overall foundation of your relationship – not a legalistic requirement that forces you to follow an agenda or tradition. To avoid some of the mistakes of situations where discipleship partners have failed, make sure we are clear about this: Jesus is our Lord and Savior – **NOT** our discipleship partner!

After saying all of that, it is still one of the highlights of my walk with God to have dear friends walk with me. May God help us all have these Christ-centered relationships that help us grow!

John Sullivan
September 2015



Prayer and Bible Study Partners

The general concept of discipleship partners is not unique to Christianity. The business, education, and athletic worlds all recognize the value of mentoring partners and the importance of the attributes that come with them: accountability, training, apprenticing, relationship building, etc.

What distinguishes Christian discipleship partners from other types of mentoring is the continual focus on Christ. These are Christ-centered relationships. So, while the mentoring principles are very valuable and practical when applied to any endeavor in life, what makes them especially valuable for disciples of Jesus is the fact that HE is the center of it all. He is the One we are trying to imitate, and He is the powerful source providing not only our “*study materials*” but also our spiritual energy to make it happen.

An obvious practical and observable result of this Christ-centered focus is that discipleship partners pray with and for one another and they share the Holy Scriptures with one another.

Like each of the four principles presented in this journal, we will spend two weeks on this particular subject. There are ten recommended personal devotionals, or “quiet-times”, that can be used one per day. These show us the Biblical foundation for this topic. Most of them are short to allow you the opportunity to focus on other personal studies that you might have. For instance, if you are studying a book like the one by Gordon Ferguson listed in the recommended reading page, you have the time to focus on that.

In addition, the emphasis is on putting this into practice, not just studying it. So, sometime during these first two weeks, try to meet with your discipleship partner(s) and pray with them and share a Scripture with each other.

Quiet Time #1

"I'm Praying for You"

Read **Philippians 1:3 – 11**.

Paul's prayers for others show us a great example of the attitudes we can have when we pray for others, the commitment we can have in praying for them, and the details of what we can pray about as we pray for them.

1. What was Paul's attitude in praying for them?
2. What kind of commitment did he say he had about praying for them?
3. What were some of the things he prayed about for them?

Meditate about how you can apply this to praying for your discipling partners and make a goal to pray for them every day. Let them know what you are doing to encourage them and also so you can ask them what they want you to pray about.

Quiet Time #2

"Please Pray for Me"

Read **Colossians 4:2 – 6**.

Paul also shows us a great example of asking others to pray for us.

1. What did Paul specifically ask them to pray for him about?
2. What do you think is the value added to your relationships when you ask your discipleship partners to pray specifically for you?

Again, meditate about how you can apply this to your discipling relationships. Let them know some specific prayer requests for your life.

Quiet Time #3

Jesus' Example

Read **John 17**.

So, discipleship partners are prayer partners! As we saw the last two days, Paul's example of praying for others is very encouraging and practical. Jesus, on the other hand, is the ultimate example of prayer, just as he is in everything. This beautiful prayer of Jesus lets us in on his heart as he poured it out to the Father. There is so much to learn from this prayer in general, but let's focus especially on the way he prayed for others (which, by the way, includes you).

1. What was his attitude about the ones he was praying for?
2. What are some of the things he was praying for others about?

Meditate about how you can apply this to praying for your prayer partners.

Quiet Time #4

Christ-Centered Relationships

Read **Colossians 1:28 – 29**.

Going back to another example of Paul, we see him saying that he proclaimed him (that is Christ). In other words, Jesus was the focus of his teachings.

1. Meditate and write down your thoughts on what Paul said about:
 - His amazingly lofty goal of presenting others perfect in Christ.
 - His willingness to work hard for this goal and let Christ provide the energy for his labors.
2. Why do you think it is important to keep Christ as the center of our focus if we want to be able to say what Paul said here?

Pray and meditate about how you can apply this Christ-centeredness to your discipling relationships.

Quiet Time #5

Delighting and Meditating on God's Word

Read **Psalm 1**.

Discipleship partners can also be Bible studying partners. After all, one of the simplest definitions of the word *disciple* is *student*. This psalm, like so many other Scriptures, refers to the attitude of delighting on the Word of God and meditating on it.

1. What does it mean to you to delight on God's Word?
2. How can you and your discipleship partner(s) help each other delight more on the Word and meditate on it?

Pray about how you can apply this to studying with your discipleship partners.

Quiet Time #6

Motivated by Love

Read **I Thessalonians 2:6 – 12**.

Learning again from the example of Paul, we see here especially that his motivation for sharing Scripture and his life with others was his love for them.

1. Why do you think it is important for us to frequently check our motivation when it comes to our discipleship partners?
2. Note that Paul also, without apologizing, refers to the hard work that is involved (verse 9). Again, do you see why our motivation is important?

Pray and meditate about how you can apply this to your discipling relationships, so that you both can honestly say what Paul said in verse 8.

Date _____

Quiet Time #7

Open My Eyes

Read **Psalm 119:18**.

If you are going to share Scripture with someone else, you have to first let it impact you. This passage gives us simple, but powerful words that we can pray every time we open God's Word.

- I. Here are two very simple "yes" or "no" questions about this prayer:
 - Do you believe, first of all, that there are wonderful things to be found in the Word of God?
 - Secondly, do you believe that God can open your eyes to see these wonderful things as you personally study his Word?
2. How does your answer to these two questions affect your sharing of Scriptures with others?

Pray about how you can apply this to praying and sharing Scripture with your discipling partner(s). Think about one passage that you will share when you meet.

Date _____

Quiet Time #8

Teach One Another

Read **Colossians 3:15 – 17**.

While the Scriptures need to impact our lives first, there is also the call to share it with others.

- I. What do you think it means to *let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly*?
2. Why do you think it is important to let Christ's word dwell in you as you share with others?

Pray and meditate about how you will apply this to the way you share Scriptures.

Quiet Time #9

"I Believe in You"

Read **Romans 15:14**.

Paul shows here his faith and confidence in his brothers and sisters.

1. How helpful is it to have someone who believes in you?
2. How helpful is it for you to communicate this to others?

Make it your goal to frequently communicate to your discipleship partners that you believe in them. They are not horrible people who are just trying to be good. They were made in God's image and are a new creation in Christ. They are loved, forgiven, and have God's Holy Spirit in them.

Pray that you will, first of all, believe this because it is the truth found in Scripture. This is not a pep talk just to make all of us feel better. This is the truth from God's Word. Satan has many voices who are communicating the lies of negativity and self-loathing. Pray that you will, as a disciple of Jesus, be someone who is communicating the message of grace and truth.

Quiet Time #10

Love One Another

Read **John 13:34 – 35**.

We close this first section with the most fundamental Scripture describing all of our relationships. We have been focusing on the practical subject of praying and sharing Scripture with your discipleship partner(s). But Jesus didn't say that prayer and Bible study are what distinguishes you as his disciples. He said love is the distinguishing factor!

How does what Jesus say here impact the reasons, the attitudes, and the manner involved in your praying and sharing Scripture with your discipleship partners?

Pray and meditate about how you will apply this Scripture.

Section 1 Summary

Discipleship partners are Christ-centered relationships who are:

- Praying partners
- Bible study partners

Their motivation is love. They really believe that praying and being devoted to Scripture will help each other grow and make it to heaven.

Practical suggestion for when you meet with your discipleship partner:

- Pray with each other and commit to praying for each other daily.
- Each of you share a Scripture that has impacted you. Make some type of goal about your personal Bible study that you can share about next time you meet.

Ask God to help each of you to be able to genuinely say about one another what Paul said in **1 Thessalonians 2:8**.

- Praying partners
- Bible study partners

Practical suggestion for when you meet with your discipleship partner:

- Pray with each other and commit to praying for each other daily.
- Each of you share a Scripture that has impacted you. Make some type of goal about your personal Bible study that you can share about next time you meet.

Notes

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Accountability Partners

The foundation of love that we saw in so many Scriptures in the first section is always important to all of our relationships in Christ. They are Christ-centered relationships motivated by love. Without that, we can be harsh, critical, and generally not much fun to be around. That can be so discouraging and frustrating and certainly does not help us grow.

On the other hand, we know that precisely because we do love each other and are trying to have God's heart in shepherding one another, we sometimes have to work hard in dealing with sin – both our own sin and our prayer partner's sin. And because we know how difficult it is to do that alone, we actually want someone to help us be accountable. But even though we want it, it can be challenging. That is, of course, why we want to make sure that we do it out of love and a pure heart.

Again, we will spend two weeks on this particular subject. The ten daily quiet-times in this section show us the Biblical foundation for this topic. God clearly shows us in Scripture why he wants us to confess our own sin and to help others see their sin. We want to make sure that we understand that this is God's plan, not our church's tradition. When done God's way, it is spiritually, mentally, and physically healthy. That being said, we also want to be clear that the use of discipleship partners may not be the only way to put these particular Scriptures into practice. But it is one way.

Also again, the emphasis in this section is on putting this principle into practice, not just studying it. So, sometime during these two weeks, try to meet with your discipleship partner(s). During that time, continue to do what we focused on in the last section. But also spend some time being open with one another about your temptations and sins.

Keep in mind that your goal in being accountable to one another is to help each other grow and make it to heaven. You are messengers of grace and truth and are one another's biggest fans – not each other's worst critics.

Section 2 *Accountability Partners*

Date _____

Quiet Time #1

Walking in the Light

Read **1 John 1:5 – 10**.

This passage describes the openness that God wants us to have in our lives as *walking in the light*.

1. As always, God knows the value of doing things his way. What do you think are the advantages of living your life in the light?
2. How can you and your discipleship partner(s) help each other with that?
3. We could view walking in the light as being harsh with ourselves or with one another. From this passage and other things you know about God, what do you think is a healthy attitude to have about living your own life in the light and helping others do that also?

Pray that you and your discipleship partners can be this open with each other.

Date _____

Quiet Time #2

Spurring One Another On

Read **Hebrews 10:23 – 25**.

This passage refers to spurring one another on.

1. What does that mean to you?
2. Sometimes you are the spur; sometimes you are the one being spurred! As we observed with the previous topic, this could be viewed in a very unhealthy way. What do you think is a healthy way to view spurring one another on (both when giving it and when receiving it)?
3. Verse 25 reminds us that our goal is to encourage one another. How can you do that and still spur one another on?
4. Read also **Proverbs 27:17**. Is this something you really want and need? Do you want to also give this to others?

Continue to pray about how you can apply this to your discipling relationships.

Quiet Time #3

Confessing Our Sins

Read **James 5:16**.

We read two days ago in **1 John 1:9** the importance of confessing our sins in connection with walking in the light. Here in today's reading we are reminded of the value of doing that, not only to God, but also to one another.

1. What do you think is healthy about confessing to one another and praying for one another?
2. Read also **1 Peter 5:8 – 9**. Remember that the enemy is the devil, not one another. How does that help you?

Pray that you and your discipleship partners will be able to confess your sins to one another.

Date _____

Quiet Time #4

Carefully Hearing Confessions

Read **Galatians 6:1 – 5**.

We want to be open and confess our own sins to help us have a healthy, clear conscience. We also want to give others that opportunity.

1. Verse 1 says to watch yourself. What are some ways you might be tempted when you are helping someone else deal with sin?
2. Why do you think it is important to keep Christ-centered as we confess our sin to one another and as others confess to us?
3. Read also **Romans 8:1 – 4** and think about how important it is for both the one confessing the sin and the one hearing it to believe and remember what these verses say. You are not a horrible, powerless person who is just desperately trying to do better. You are someone who is in Christ and is not condemned, and therefore you are using the power of Christ to make sure that sin does not have the victory.

Pray and meditate about how you can apply this to your relationships.

Quiet Time #5

Speaking the Truth in Love

Read **Ephesians 4:14 – 16**.

This passage beautifully describes a goal that we have in all of our relationships as disciples – we want to grow and we want to help each other grow in Christ. Verse 15 speaks specifically of speaking the truth in love.

1. Why do you think it is important that our relationships actually have a goal, such as this one?
2. Why do you think it is important that we speak the truth to one another, if we want to reach this goal of growing in Christ?
3. Why is it also important that we speak the truth in love?

Meditate and pray about how you can apply this to your discipleship partners.

Quiet Time #6

A Life-Giving Rebuke

Read **Proverbs 15:31 – 33**.

One word that is occasionally used in Scripture when we are helping one another deal with sin is *rebuke*. Hopefully, our discipling relationship times do not just consist of one rebuke after another. How discouraging that would be! But, also hopefully, it is not true that we never rebuke one another.

1. Note that this proverb says that it is a *life-giving rebuke*. What does that tell you?
2. But it is a *rebuke*. What does that tell you?
3. What other valuable insight do you get from this passage? See also **Proverbs 27:5** and **28:23**.

Pray and meditate about how you can apply this to your discipling relationship(s).

Quiet Time #7

Keep with the Scriptures!

Read **2 Timothy 3:16 – 17**.

The rebuking that we studied about in the previous quiet time is one of the things that Scripture is capable of doing – along with teaching, correcting, and training.

1. As stated before, we may not have to rebuke or be rebuked very often. But when we do, why do you think it is important to make sure that we keep focused on Scripture (either as the giver or the receiver of the rebuke)?
2. Remember the instruction from **Colossians 3:16** (our quiet time on p. 5). Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another. Meditate again on that great thought.

Pray about how you can apply this to your discipleship partner(s).

Quiet Time #8

Repentance and Grace

Read **Acts 3:17 – 23**.

It is often said that confession is good for the soul, but we know that confession itself is only the first step. We need to also repent, and our desire is forgiveness.

1. What does repentance mean to you?
2. Forgiveness is the result of God's grace. You don't earn your forgiveness by your repentance. But your repentance puts you in the position to receive God's grace. This passage refers to *times of refreshing*. Why is forgiveness so refreshing?
3. Read also **Proverbs 28:13**, which refers to confessing and renouncing sin. Our goal is to not only confess our sin and be forgiven, but to also stop doing it. How can discipleship partners help each other with that?

Pray and meditate about how you will apply this to your relationships.

Quiet Time #9

"Lead Us Not Into Temptation"

Read **Luke 11:1 – 4**.

Confession and repentance are obviously what we do after we have already sinned. And thank God for his grace and forgiveness! But there are things we can do before we sin to fight the temptation.

1. Prayer is the first defense, as Jesus tells us in verse 4 of the model prayer. Read also what Jesus said to Peter in **Matthew 26:41**. What stands out to you from that?
2. Read as well **Titus 2:11 – 14**. The grace of God teaches us to say "no" to temptation. A legalistic set of rules does not have any lasting power to help us fight off temptation. Grace does. At the same time, though, a proper understanding of the grace of God never makes us feel like it is OK to yield to temptation or that we don't have the power to resist. Both the person struggling with temptation and the friend who is trying to help that person want to remember and believe the truth found so often in Scripture: you are not a weak, horrible person who has no choice but to sin; you are a child of the great God of the universe, and he empowers you to say "no" to temptation. And when you do sin, he still loves you unconditionally and will help you start all over again.

How can discipleship partners help each other with these thoughts?

Pray that each of you will not only be open about sin, but also about temptation.

Quiet Time #10

Christ-Centered Love

Read **John 13:34 – 35**.

We close this second section as we did the first one. Similar to what we noticed in Section 1, Jesus didn't say that confessing and confronting sin are what distinguishes you as his disciples. He said love is the distinguishing factor!

How does what Jesus say here impact the reasons, the attitudes, and the manner in which you confess sins and temptations to others and hear theirs?

Pray and meditate about how you will apply this Scripture.

Section 2 Summary

Discipleship partners are Christ-centered relationships who are:

- Praying partners
- Bible study partners
- Accountability partners

Their motivation is love. They believe that, by the powerful grace of God, what they are doing will help each other grow and make it to heaven.

Practical suggestion for when you meet with your discipleship partner:

- Continue to pray and share Scriptures with one another.
- Be open with your sins and temptations and pray for each other. Make a goal about how you will help each other fight Satan.

Ask God to help each of you to be able to genuinely say about one another what Paul said in **1 Thessalonians 2:8**.

- Praying partners
- Bible study partners
- Accountability partners

- Continue to pray and share Scriptures with one another.
- Be open with your sins and temptations and pray for each other. Make a goal about how you will help each other fight Satan.

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Disciple-Making Partners

So far we have seen that discipleship partners are Christ-centered relationships. They are prayer and Bible study partners and accountability partners. They do this because their goals are to:

- help each other be as much like Christ as is humanly possible on this earth;
- to help each other keep growing in faith;
- to help each other ultimately make it to heaven.

In addition to these personal discipleship goals, followers of Christ also have a heart for the lost. Jesus said that he came to seek and save the lost (**Luke 19:10**), and he told his disciples that they would go into the world making disciples (**Matthew 28:18 – 20**). Disciples of Christ make other disciples. That's the way it has always been from the beginning of Christ's church.

This two-week section will focus on how we, as discipleship partners, can help each other make other disciples. That's a goal that we all have as individual disciples. But it helps to have a partner – not only discipleship partners, as we have focused on in the first two sections of this journal, but also disciple-making partners. Each of the ten quiet times in this section will ask you to think about how you and your discipleship partners can encourage and support one another in your efforts at making disciples.

As we did in the first two parts of this journal, the emphasis in this section is on putting this principle into practice, not just studying it. So, sometime during these two weeks, try to meet with your discipleship partner(s). During that time, continue to put the first two topics into practice. But also spend some time on evangelism. If you can't literally evangelize together, pray for and encourage one another in your individual evangelism.

Keep in mind that your goal is not to coerce one another. You are one another's biggest fans – not each other's policemen.

Section 3 *Disciple-Making Partners*

Date _____

Quiet Time #1

Fishers of Men

Read **Mark 1:14 – 20**.

This example of Jesus' calling his first disciples has inspired us, as his disciples today, to realize that following him gives us a great and eternal purpose, which he metaphorically described here as being *fishers of men*.

1. First of all, how does this apply to you personally?

2. As we have often stated in this journal, we want our relationships to be Christ-centered. In this passage, Jesus emphasized following him and that he will produce this evangelistic purpose in a disciple's life. Is it obvious why it is important to stay Christ-centered in our desire to evangelize?

3. Now, how do you think that you and your discipleship partners can help each other with this purpose that Jesus is calling us, as disciples, to have?

Pray and meditate about how you can apply this to your relationships.

Date _____

Quiet Time #2

Two-by-Two

Read **Luke 10:1 – 4**.

This is the most explicit example of Jesus sending disciples out as partners.

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase *Lord of Harvest*?

2. Why do you think Jesus referred to them as *lambs among wolves*?

3. What do you think are some benefits of going out two-by-two?

Pray to the Lord of Harvest, and then put what he says here into practice.

Section 3 *Disciple-Making Partners*

Date _____

Quiet Time #3

Always Start with the Heart

Read **Romans 10:1**.

Paul mentions his heart's desire and his prayer for the salvation of the lost.

1. Why do you think it is important for you individually to focus on your heart, when it comes to evangelism?
2. Why do you think it is also important for you to spend much time in prayer for the lost and for your personal evangelism?
3. How can you and your discipleship partners help each other with both of these – your heart's desire and your prayer for the lost?

Pray for each other about your hearts' desire for the salvation of the lost.

Date _____

Quiet Time #4

Prayer, Bible Study, Accountability

Read **Philippians 1:1 – 11**.

We read part of this passage for the first quiet time of this journal (p. 2).

1. (Review) What stands out to you from this passage about the importance of the principles that we have studied so far: praying for one another, sharing Scripture with one another and being accountable to one another?
2. Verse 5 (in the NIV) refers to our relationships as a *partnership in the gospel*. How do you think that you and your discipleship partners can help each other, among other things, to spread the Gospel to the lost?

Pray and meditate about how you can apply this.

Section 3 *Disciple-Making Partners*

Date _____

Quiet Time #5

Example 1: Peter and John

Read **Acts 3 – 4**.

Examples always help us learn important principles. For the next four quiet times, we will focus on four great examples of evangelism partners in the Bible.

1. There are so many amazing statements in these two chapters. What are some that stand out to you?

2. You probably noticed how many times this passage refers to *Peter and John* being together. What role do you think that their partnership might have played in these amazing events?

Pray that what is said about Peter and John in 4:13 may be true of you as well.

Date _____

Quiet Time #6

Example 2: Paul and Barnabas

Read **Acts 13:1 – 12**.

1. What do we learn from this passage about the vital role of the Holy Spirit and the importance of our prayer in the work of spreading the Gospel?

2. Paul and Barnabas made a great team. How would you imagine that their partnership helped each other during their missionary journeys?

Pray about what you want to imitate about their relationship.

Quiet Time #7

Example 3: Paul and Silas

Read **Acts 16:16 – 40**.

1. This is another amazing story of spreading the Gospel. What are some of the things that stand out to you from this passage?
2. As we did in the previous examples, think about what role their partnership might have had in helping Paul and Silas do what they did here.

Continue to pray about what you would like to imitate from this example.

Quiet Time #8

Example 4: Paul and Timothy

Read **2 Timothy 2:1 – 2**.

1. Notice that the first things Paul says to Timothy here is to *be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*. Paul didn't advocate strength through rules and regulations. Nor did he believe that weakness is the result of emphasizing grace. He fully believed that understanding grace in all its truth bears much fruit. (See also **Colossians 1:6**.)
2. Paul wanted Timothy to pass on to others what Paul had taught him. How do you think that relates to what Jesus said in **Matthew 28:18 – 20** about his disciples making other disciples?
3. How can you apply this to you and your discipleship partners?

Pray for reliable people that you and your discipleship partners can pass the Gospel onto.

Quiet Time #9

Prayer for Boldness

Read **Ephesians 6:19 – 20; Colossians 4:2 – 4.**

We read earlier (p. 20) the prayer for boldness in **Acts 4:29**. In these passages, we see Paul's prayer requests about his evangelism.

1. In the first Scripture above, Paul asks for prayer that he might speak *fearlessly*. That is probably an obvious need for most of us. But not all of us ask for prayers about it. What do you learn from Paul's example?

2. In the second Scripture above, Paul asks for prayer that he might speak *clearly*. Again, this is probably a need for most of us, but we might not all ask for prayers about it. What do you learn from that?

Pray and, as Paul did, ask others to pray for you that God may give you open doors, the words to speak, and the courage and clarity to speak them.

Quiet Time #10

Christ-Centered Love

Read **John 13:34 – 35.**

We close this third section as we did the first two. Similar to what we noticed before, Jesus didn't say that making disciples is what distinguishes you as his disciples. He said love is the distinguishing factor!

How does what Jesus say here impact the reasons, the attitudes, and the manner in which you make disciples?

Pray and meditate about how you will continue to apply this Scripture.

Section 3 Summary

Discipleship partners are Christ-centered relationships who are:

- Praying partners
- Bible study partners
- Accountability partners
- Disciple-making partners

Their motivation is love. They believe that what they are doing will help each other grow and make it to heaven AND that, individually and together, they can help others become disciples.

Practical suggestion for when you meet with your discipleship partner:

- Continue to pray and share Scriptures with one another.
- Be open with your sins and temptations and pray for each other. Make a goal about how you will help each other fight Satan.
- Spend time together praying about the lost, go somewhere to share your faith together, and try to set up a Bible study with someone who is not a disciple.

Continue to ask God to help each of you to be able to genuinely say about one another what Paul said in **I Thessalonians 2:8**.

Notes

[illegible]

Friends

The last topic of this journal is one that can sometimes be overlooked.

Discipleship is obviously a very serious and sometimes difficult process. As we pray for one another, share Scriptures with one another, confess sin to one another, and make other disciples with one another, it is possible to forget that we are also one another's friend.

- ❖ We are not business partners – we are friends.
- ❖ We are not each other's assignment – we are friends.
- ❖ We are not appointments in our schedules – we are friends.

As you probably know, the Bible has a lot to say about friendships. The ten quiet times in this section will focus on some of those Scriptures. And, as we have done in the first three sections, our goal is not to just “study these out”. We want to put them into practice. So, sometime during these next two weeks, try to do something together just because you are friends. Continue to put into practice what you have started from the first three sections of this journal, but also allow yourselves the opportunity and the privilege of enjoying your friendship.

Of course, we know that the church is made up of disciples of Jesus Christ. We are not a social club or a bunch of buddies who get together regularly to just have some fun. We are Christ-centered relationships. The thing that makes us friends and helps us grow in our friendship is Christ in us. As long as we are applying the Scriptures that we have studied earlier in this journal, our relationships will be Christ-centered and they will also be friendships that will be encouraging and enjoyable. The kind of joy that disciple friends have is the kind that leaves no regret. They have fun with one another doing things that they do not regret later. But they do have fun!

If that's a new teaching for you, then let me say it again. Go ahead and have some fun. (That's actually allowed in Christianity!)

Quiet Time #1

Two Are Better Than One

Read **Ecclesiastes 4:7 – 12.**

This passage is often read in weddings, and you can see that it has a beautiful application to marriage. But you can also see that this Scripture does not actually mention marriage; instead, it is referring to friendships.

1. What does this passage say about why two are better than one?

What do you think is the third strand mentioned in verse 12?

2. As is often true with scriptural principles, you want to start by examining whether or not you actually believe it. In this case, for instance, do you believe that for you two are better than one?
3. What do you learn from this passage about your friendships?

Pray and meditate about how you can apply this to your relationships.

Quiet Time #2

That's What Friends Are For

Read **John 15:12 – 15.**

When friends do something for one another, they will sometimes say: “*That’s what friends are for.*” (They might even start singing the song by that title!)

1. Jesus said that friends lay down their lives for each other. To him, that’s what friends are for. What does that mean to you?
2. How does it feel that Jesus says that we are his friends?
3. How can you apply this passage to your friendships?

Pray about your friendships and how you can lay your life down for them.

Quiet Time #3

You've Got a FriendRead **I Samuel 18:1 – 4; 23:15 – 18.**

David and Jonathan were a great example of friendship.

1. How can you apply the following to your friendships?
 - “Jonathan became one in spirit with David.” (18:1)
 - “He loved him as himself.” (18:1)
 - “Jonathan made a covenant with David.” (18:3 and 23:18)
2. Jonathan helped David *find strength in God* (23:16). This may be one of the most important goals of disciple friendships. What do you think?

Pray that your discipleship partners will know that they can count on you as a friend who will help them find strength in God.

Date _____

Quiet Time #4

A Friend in Need . . .Read **Luke 11:5 – 13.**

Prayer is the main subject of Jesus' teaching here, but he uses friendships to illustrate his point.

1. When this person was in need, he turned to his friend. *A friend in need is a friend in deed.* How does that apply to you, when:
 - you have a need?
 - your friend has a need?
2. Note that, at first, the friend is bothered by this midnight request. (Can you relate?) Our first response to our friends may not always be a positive one. But this friend does come through. What does that tell you?

Ask God to help you desire to go to your friends when you have a need and to help you really want to help them when they come to you.

Quiet Time #5

Christ-centered FriendshipsRead **3 John**.

In this short letter, John uses the word *friend* over and over again. You can see that they weren't just buddies, their relationship was centered on faith in Christ. For example, comment on how each of the following statements apply to you:

1. "My dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth." (verse 1)
2. "Dear friend, I pray . . ." (verse 2)
3. "Dear friend, you are faithful . . ." (verse 5)
4. "Dear friend, do not imitate evil." (verse 11)
5. "I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face." (verse 14)
6. "The friends here send their greetings. Greet the friends there by name." (verse 14)

Pray that you and your discipleship partners can have the friendship that John and Gaius had.

Quiet Time #6

My Dear Friends

Like John, Paul also often referred to his dear friends in his writings.

1. Read each of these short statements from Paul.
 - **Romans 16:5, 9, 12** Greet my dear friends Epenetus, Stachys, and Persis.
 - **Colossians 4:14** Our dear friend Luke.
 - **Philemon 1** Philemon, our dear friend.
2. What do you learn from these greetings to apply to your friendships?

Pray that you and your discipleship partners can have the friendship that Paul and his friends had.

Section 4 *Friends*

Date _____

Quiet Time #7

Build Up and Encourage

Read **Ephesians 4:29 – 32**.

1. What stands out to you from this passage about the up-building and encouraging role of relationships?
2. Read also **I Thessalonians 5:11**. What do you learn from this to apply to your friendships?

Pray for your discipleship partners and ask God to help you be an encourager.

Date _____

Quiet Time #8

Friends Don't Let Friends . . .

Read **Proverbs 27:5 – 6; 9**

"Friends don't let friends drive drunk." This famous line about drunk driving can apply to many other situations, as well. Because they are friends, they care enough for each other that they try to help each other fight off any temptations.

1. We saw this concept in Section 2 of this journal. Why is it important that we are talking about friends challenging one another, and not just casual acquaintances? (As the saying goes: *Good friends say nice things behind your back and have the difficult conversations to your face.*)
2. Verse 9 refers to a friend's earnest counsel. Besides helping each other deal with sin, friends also give advice to one another. How do you feel about giving and receiving advice?

Continue to pray about how you can apply this to your discipleship partners.

Section 4 *Friends*

Date _____

Quiet Time #9

Are We Having Fun Yet?

Read **Acts 2:46 – 47** and **I Peter 4:8 – 10**.

There's no doubt about it: friends love to eat together and just hang out with one another in their homes and other places. That was clearly true in the first century church, and it is still true today.

1. You can tell from the passage in **Acts** that they had fun together. As stated in the introduction to this section, it wasn't just a social club, but it was fun nevertheless. So ask yourself about your discipleship relationships: *Are we having fun yet?*
2. The passage in **I Peter** talks about sincere love and hospitality. For starters, he says to offer your hospitality without grumbling. (Recall the friend in **Luke 11:7** from a previous quiet time.) What do you learn from that?

Pray about applying this to your discipleship partners and enjoy it!

Date _____

Quiet Time #10

Christ-Centered Love

Read **John 13:34 – 35**.

We close this section as we did the first three. Similar to what we noticed before, Jesus didn't say that making friends is what distinguishes you as his disciples. He said love is the distinguishing factor!

How does what Jesus say here impact your friendships?

Pray and meditate about how you will continue to apply this Scripture.

Section 4 Summary

Discipleship partners are Christ-centered relationships who are:

- Praying partners
- Bible study partners
- Accountability partners
- Disciple-making partners
- Friends

Their motivation is love. They believe that their friendship will help each other grow and make it to heaven as well as help others become disciples.

Practical suggestion for when you meet with your discipleship partner:

- Continue to apply the previous principles.
- Have some fun together!

Continue to ask God to help each of you to be able to genuinely say about one another what Paul said in **1 Thessalonians 2:8**.

- Praying partners
- Bible study partners
- Accountability partners
- Disciple-making partners
- Friends

Practical suggestion for when you meet with your discipleship partner:

- Continue to apply the previous principles.
- Have some fun together!

Continue to ask God to help each of you to be able to genuinely say about one another what Paul said in **I Thessalonians 2:8**.

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Conclusion

Thank you for devoting yourself to studying this great topic and, perhaps more importantly, to putting it into practice.

If you're like me, it is an inspiring goal to have all of my relationships putting these biblical principles into practice, but it is also a very big challenge. I know, without a doubt, that I do not come close to always living up to all of these ideals. But I also know that I am trying and that the disciples I have as my friends are trying as well.

So this word of encouragement: don't be discouraged or give up if it seems hard. Anything great is hard. Keep trying; keep praying for God's strength to do better; and keep relying on his grace to make up for our short comings. And please consider the words found on p. ii of the introduction to distinguish between the biblical principles about relationships and the opinions we have about how to put those principles into practice. The principles come from God and are to be respected accordingly; the opinions come from humans.

There are two Scriptures that we noticed in each section of this journal. One is **John 13:34 – 35**, containing the words of Jesus:

*A new command I give you: Love one another.
As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Jesus didn't say that having discipleship partners is what distinguishes you as his disciple. He said that it is your love for one another. Hopefully, two things are clear to all of us: (1) There is no rule in the Bible that says that you must have a discipleship partner to be a disciple of Jesus. (2) On the other hand, discipleship partners is a practical way to help us put into practice the hundreds of Scriptures that tell us what our relationships in Christ should be like. As long as we keep them Christ-centered, they will be the friendships that glorify God and encourage all of us in our walk with him.

Finally, another Scripture we referred to in each section of this journal is **1 Thessalonians 2:8**. It is hoped that these words of Paul describing his relationships are the words that we can genuinely say about one another:

*We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you
not only the gospel of God but our lives as well,
because you had become so dear to us.*

May God help us have these Christ-centered relationships that help us grow!

John Sullivan

Recommended Reading

There are many excellent resources to help with the study of discipleship relationships. Here are just a few.

Call to Discipleship, by Juan Carlos Ortiz. Published by Logos International, 1975.

Discipling: The Multiplying Ministry, by Milton Jones. Published by Star Bible & Tract Corp., 1982.

In His Steps, by Charles Sheldon. Published by The John C. Winston Company, 1935.

One Another, by Thomas Jones and Steve Brown. Published by Discipleship Publications International, 2008.

The Cost of Discipleship, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Published by Touchstone, 1995.

The Joy of Following Jesus, by J. Oswald Sanders. Published by Moody Press, 1994.

The Lion Never Sleeps, by Mike Taliaferro. Published by Discipleship Publications International, 2003.

The Master Plan of Evangelism, by Robert Coleman. Published by Fleming H. Revell, 1993.

The Power of Discipling, by Gordon Ferguson. Published by Illumination Publishers International, 2010.