



# The Journey

An Introduction to  
Discipleship/Confirmation

**D/C resources will help students:**

- Encounter Christ personally
- Grow deeper in faith and understanding
- Discuss spiritual and faith ideas with parents
- Develop a pattern of personal devotions
- Deepen relationships with the church, the pastor, and other Christians
- Prepare for spiritual leadership

The Evangelical Covenant Church

# The D/C Experience

**D**isciplineship/Confirmation is a resource that can be used for youth and adult discipleship. The Evangelical Covenant Church added the word "discipleship" to "confirmation" to better articulate the purpose of this long-standing ministry. It stresses confirming the faith while also encouraging participants to begin, or intentionally continue, a life-long journey as a disciple or learner of Jesus Christ.

Discipleship and Confirmation experiences each hold an important place in the faith development of adolescents. Some Covenant churches offer a special D/C class taught by the pastor. Others use D/C in their youth ministry for discipleship. The goal of D/C is to present an overview of the Bible and church beliefs while offering all participants the opportunity to make or strengthen their personal commitment to follow Christ. For persons baptized as infants, D/C provides an opportunity to revisit the vows made by their parents at the time of baptism and take personal responsibility for their faith by "confirming" it for themselves. For people who choose believer's baptism, D/C prepares them for baptism or grounds them in basic elements of the Christian faith after baptism.

The Covenant Book of Worship describes this ministry as follows: "Confirmation in the Covenant Church is designed to be a

systematic exploration of God's word, the history of our faith, and the importance of living a Christian life. Within the curriculum there is opportunity not only for education in biblical truth, but also for students to come face to face with the call of Jesus to enter into a personal relationship with him and grow in their faith....The focus of the confirmation process is twofold. First, students have an opportunity to learn of the church's history, truths of the Christian faith, and the stories of the Bible. Second, students



develop discipling relationships with pastors and mentors....At whatever point students are in their faith journey, this balance of learning and relationship is critical to the impact of the confirmation process on their lives. Not only do they learn what the Bible says; through discipleship they learn to articulate what they believe about the Bible's message, and how biblical faith translates into Christian living and responsibility in the world."

# A Journal for D/C

The two part D/C journal, called *The Journey*, presents the story of God from beginning to end. One book explores the Old Testament and the other presents the New Testament and church history. *The Journey* encourages students to read their Bibles daily using passages that expand on the material presented in the journal. So the Bible is the central textbook for D/C and the journal becomes the guide or roadmap. The journal includes the following elements: A Session Overview, Time with God, Building Blocks, Going the Extra Mile, and Going Deeper.

## Session Overview...

In each session *The Journey* presents a contemporary overview of the biblical message. For a person new to the Bible, this overview provides background and insight to help the Bible reading come alive. For a person who has attended church for a while it will help to put the stories into context and apply them to real life.

## Time with God...

Each session includes daily Bible readings and questions to guide the reader to the core of the text. The first question addresses biblical content while the second connects the text to life. The purpose for these assignments is:

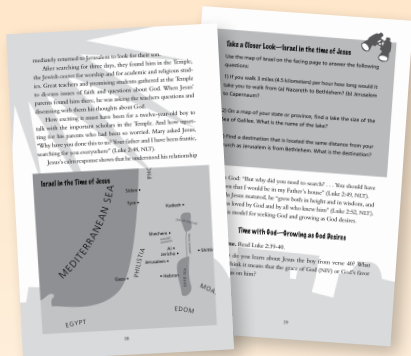
- to help the reader understand the material by reading the biblical source, not just an interpretation of the text.

- to learn that the Bible is a reliable resource for today.
- to establish a Bible reading pattern that will be beneficial throughout all of life.

Space to record prayer reflections is included with each session.

## Building Blocks...

Twenty-six key theological concepts have been defined in short statements followed by a supporting Scripture verse. These statements provide a starting point for understanding and discussion. Many classes stress the memorization of the Building Blocks as a resource for life.



## Going the Extra Mile...

Some participants will be ready for a deeper understanding of the basic tenets of the faith. Short but significant articles provide greater insight into the core beliefs of the Covenant church.

## Going Deeper...

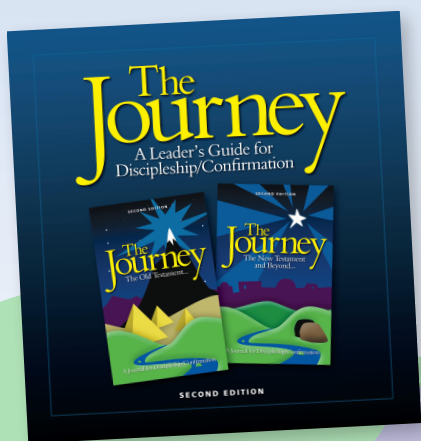
Some students learn better by participating in activities rather than just reading. These activities will reinforce and expand the learning.

# Curriculum Resources

## The Leader's Guide...

A loose-leaf notebook provides the teaching plan for each session in *The Journey*. Careful attention is given to include ideas that are appropriate for a variety of learning styles in each session plan. The session plans are designed for a 60 minute time frame with options available to expand the time to 90 minutes. Also included are suggestions for adapting the plans for both large and small class sizes. Other resources in the Leader's Guide include:

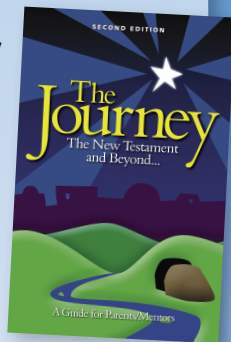
- Introductory articles
- A list of the Building Blocks
- Appendix articles, including a look at the importance of D/C, an explanation of the parent's and mentor's roles, a guide for game playing, parent forum ideas, and a creation and evolution article.



## The Parent/Mentor Guide...

A spiritual mentor is a vital element in the spiritual growth of youth. Mentors encourage youth in their relationship with Christ. Parents and other interested Christian adults can serve effectively as mentors. The acronym FAITH provides a reminder of the characteristics of a spiritual mentor.

- **Faithful**, dependable, fulfills commitments
- **Available**, willing to make time to invest in the life of a young person
- **Initiator**, initiates contact with the student
- **Teachable**, willing to grow, interested in learning
- **Heart for God**, desires to follow Christ wholeheartedly



## Adult D/C Groups...

Churches that provide D/C for adolescents often have adults who express interest in forming such a group. Although designed for early adolescents, some churches have discovered that *The Journey* is also helpful for adults. A resource, "How to Adapt *The Journey* Discipleship/Confirmation Curriculum for Adult Learners", was written to help churches evaluate and use *The Journey* as a resource for adult learners. This resource is available from [covenantbookstore.com](http://covenantbookstore.com).

# Getting Started

## Tips for getting started...

- 1) Think about the youth in your church. Do they know and understand the Bible? Would an intentional teaching and learning environment help them grow in their faith?
- 2) Meet with church leaders and youth advisors to discuss the information in this brochure. Seek approval to move forward.
- 3) Talk with parents of potential students at an informational gathering about D/C as a ministry. Are they willing and interested in supporting this ministry?
- 4) Talk to potential students individually and ask about their faith. Are they growing? How well do they understand the Bible? What would make church more meaningful? Encourage them to think about joining D/C.
- 5) Read *The Journey* and begin to consider your plans for the year.
  - Pray about this ministry.
  - Set up a schedule for the year. (Try to avoid school conflicts.)
  - How often will you meet?
  - What time will you meet?
  - Who are the potential students?
  - What outcomes do you envision?
  - Are parents/mentors a resource?
  - What can you do to get people to involved?
  - Would an adult group find D/C meaningful?
  - Who will help you?



## D/C in the Covenant Church...

The results of a recent survey provide a glimpse of D/C in the Covenant church.

- 7th and 8th graders are the most common age group for D/C
- Classes meet: weekly (90%) or twice a month (6%)
- Class sessions last: 45 minutes (19%), 60 minutes (47%), 75 minutes (20%)
- D/C is completed in 1 year (10%), 2 years (85%)
- 77% of churches responding indicate they have offered a class within the last 5 years. 57% start a new class annually and another 23% start one every two years
- Teachers expect: class participation (73%), read journal (52%), worship notes (46%), final tests (19%), memorize scripture (46%), memorize Building Blocks (35%), final paper or project (28%)
- Teachers include: pastor (65%), associate pastor (7%), youth pastor (21%), other church member (19%)

# Celebration Sunday

As your D/C study nears completion, consider ways to mark this milestone while encouraging the participants to continue their personal journey with Christ. Be sure to avoid graduation or completion images as the journey continues through all of life. Many churches set aside one Sunday for this special celebration.

## Celebrate discipleship...

- Include opportunities for students to share their faith-related insights.
- Use the Building Blocks as a responsive reading or opportunity for reflection. This will also remind students from earlier D/C classes of their learning.
- Share D/C testimonies, projects or sermons written by the students.

## Celebrate confirmation...

Confirmation Sunday has traditionally been a time of blessing. To make the experience meaningful:

- Use the Rite of Confirmation from the Covenant Book of Worship.
- Incorporate salt and light to signify that these students are to be salt and light in their world.
- Lay hands on the students as you bless them. Some churches invite parents, friends and mentors to participate in this time of blessing.

## Create reminders...

Gifts from the church provide a meaningful way to help students remember their D/C journey. Often leather bound Bibles are presented. Other churches give Bibles when students begin D/C so they are able to use them for study. Other symbolic gifts might include: a cross, a candle or candle holder, a nail or a rock. Is there something you could give that would help students remember their D/C experience in a special way?

# Next Steps

## Church membership...

This may be a good time to encourage and offer an opportunity for students to commit to serving as a member of the church.

## Retreats...

Help students solidify their D/C commitments through relationships, study, reflection and worship. Significant times for a retreat include one week before D/C Sunday, and one year after D/C ends.

# Making It Great

## Pastors/Teachers...

D/C provides a great opportunity for the pastor/teacher to encourage students to grow in their relationships with God, the pastor and the other students. In order to accomplish this, the leader needs to:

- Arrive early to interact with the students and show interest in their daily lives.
- Keep the sessions moving. Include activities as well as words.
- Take time to explore the spiritual journey of each student.
- Provide opportunities for students to serve both individually and as a group.

Don't forget to have fun. Let the students see you as a real person. Allow God's word to come alive through you.



## Parents...

D/C is designed to help foster a partnership between youth, parents and church. For D/C to be most effective, parents are encouraged to use the Parent/Mentor Guide, reading the session overviews and Scripture passages, as well as discussing the questions weekly. The key here is not just to find the "right" answer, but to use this guide as a tool to foster discussion on faith and life issues. Simply stated, a parent's role is to:

- Engage regularly in faith life conversations
- Encourage regular participation in group time and daily readings
- Encourage your child by showing interest in what he/she is learning
- Use the Parent/Mentor Guide to help in the spiritual growth journey

"Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it."—Proverbs 22:6 (TNIV)



## What are people saying about *The Journey*?

“My greatest joy in teaching Discipleship/Confirmation is developing relationships with young teens and seeing their minds and hearts open to more of God’s Word. Their final project essays really show how much they have learned and how deeply they do think about God and their world.”

In a recent survey, D/C teachers were asked to tell what they liked about *The Journey*. The following represent the responses to this question.

- the journal format with daily Bible reading
- manageable units of material
- variety of activities in the leader’s guide
- choices for the teacher
- good summary of the Bible
- the goal is more than head knowledge; it is integrating that knowledge into life

Discipleship/Confirmation remains an integral part of youth ministry in the Covenant church. One church pastor identifies three reasons that his church provides a D/C class. “We offer it because we have historically offered a Confirmation class. As a church we believe it is important for young people to have a time of study/discipleship that encourages them to grow in knowledge and their faith. As a pastor it allows me to have two years of time spent with young people in Junior High prior to them getting so busy with working, extra curricular activities, driving, etc.”

The survey asked the teachers to share their greatest joy in teaching Discipleship/Confirmation and their answers give insight into their motivation as well as the outcomes for this ministry.

- “Building relationships with students and seeing them make their faith their own rather than their parents.”
- “Seeing kids grapple and make sense of important doctrines.”
- “Those ‘Ah-ha!’ moments.”
- “To see parents as well as students come to faith and grow in faith.”
- “Meeting with the confirmation students individually to discuss their confirmation essays. These essays often reveal genuine Christian formation. It is a great joy to think that I may have had some part in that.”
- “When it all comes together on Confirmation Sunday and the teens express their faith in Christ. They always surprise me.”
- “To have a young person say thanks and to remember me ten years later.”

Make and Deepen Disciples and Covenant Communications

## The Evangelical Covenant Church

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