



Discipleship Planning Guide

This guide offers suggestions for facilitating a comprehensive approach to discipleship, focusing on practical elements and practices that enable persons to follow the heart of God into the world. An explanation for this approach can be found here: <http://www.covchurch.org/discipleship/theology-philosophy/>

Four Steps:

EVALUATE / PLAN / INVITE / GROW is a helpful four-step way to organize, plan and sustain a discipleship journey. Below you will find suggestions and resources for each step. This resource has been developed in a way that enables pastor, staff and leaders to deepen relationships with each other and God as they formationally move through each step of the journey. You may choose to approach each step in individual gatherings or a retreat setting. Live into each step prayerfully seeking the direction and will of God.



EVALUATE

Where is our church at right now in the discipleship journey?

Below you will find several assessment options. You may use however many you wish. Keep in mind that although the story options take longer to determine the pulse of the congregation, they also give voice to the congregation and a deeper understanding of how the Spirit is at work within individuals and families.

1. Assessing Foundations: Utilization of the Church Assessment can be helpful in assessing the foundational principles of disciple forming congregations. You can find it here:

<http://www.covchurch.org/discipleship/files/2014/03/Foundational-principles-of-disciple3-14.pdf>

2. Assessing Culture: A deeper understanding of the culture in which we live and minister is also helpful in developing a discipleship plan for the congregation. The Cultural Assessment asks key questions to assist the church in understanding the core values, backgrounds and influences of the community. You can find it here:

<http://www.covchurch.org/children/files/2012/06/Ministry-and-Culture.pdf>

3. Assessing the Congregation: There is always that nagging issue of how we assess the spiritual growth of individuals and families. One way is by looking at three key characteristics of vital disciples: willingness to grow deeper in their relationship with Christ, a prayerful attentiveness to the transforming power and direction of the Spirit and an openness to share their story of growth and struggle. Here are four resources that can be helpful assessing where the congregation is at on their journey. These also give voice to the congregation to that address not only where they are at but where they want to go.

Invitation to GROW:

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/invitation-to-grow/>

Your Story:

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/your-story/>

Telling Your Story:

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/files/2010/05/Telling-Your-Story.pdf>

My GROW Adventure (For Children)

<https://www.covchurch.org/resources/my-grow-adventure/>

Prayer of Examen: Once you have gathered the information, the next portion of the evaluation step is to enter into a time of prayerful evaluation. You can use this spiritual practice to review what you have learned through the assessments.

1. *Acknowledge being in the presence of GOD.*

We are always in God's presence, but in prayer we place ourselves in God's presence in an especially attentive way. God knows the whole body intimately and loves us in the deepest possible way. As we still ourselves we become more aware of God's presence both around us and within us.

2. *Look at the assessments with gratitude.*

After a few moments, begin to give thanks to God for what has been shared and observed and for the specific work of the Spirit within the body.

3. *Ask help from the Holy Spirit*

Ask that God's Spirit might help us look at our actions and attitudes and help us to understand the intentions and motivations of our hearts. Ask that the Spirit would shape our thinking and decisions.

4. *Review the journey*

The assessments are really meant to help us see how we have been living into God's story. This is not the stage where we are trying to "fix" anything but examining what has already transpired. Pray through each assessment and capture thoughts and ideas.

Pray through the Foundations Assessment

Where is God at work?

What are the highlights?

What do we want to affirm?

What hasn't gone so well?

Where are the struggles?

Where do we see needs that might need addressing?

Pray through the Cultural Assessment

What in the culture may move persons toward God?

What in the culture may move persons away from God?

How does our church reflect the culture positively? Negatively?

Where do we see needs that might need addressing?

Pray through the Invitation to GROW Responses

What are the greatest perceived needs of the church body?

Are there any subtle or underlying issues or needs?

What do we want to affirm?

What do we acknowledge are struggles?

Where do we see needs that might need addressing?

Pray through Story

Where has God been at work?

What are the highlights?

What do we want to affirm?

Where are the struggles?

Where do we see needs that might need addressing?

Prayer Review

What have you noticed that is most spiritually fruitful for the church?

What do we believe should continue in concept? In form?

What do we believe needs addressing?

PLAN

Preparing to Plan

Remember this is not about developing a program but a plan for helping the community of faith draw closer to God and each other so that all might follow the heart of God into the world.

Embodying Our Faith: This spiritual practice is helpful in establishing posture for moving forward. <http://www.covchurch.org/resources/files/2010/05/Embodying-Our-Faith.pdf>

Developing a Plan

Prayerfully developing the plan

You may wish to begin with a guided retreat for this portion or use the “Rule of Life” below.

Prayer Retreat, Streams and Pathways: This retreat is framed around the spiritual practice of developing a Rule of Life. <http://www.covchurch.org/discipleship/prayer/retreats/>

Developing a Rule of Life: Use this spiritual practice to begin developing a rule of life for the congregation. You may find the “Resource Options” at the end of this Planning Guide helpful.

1. *Draw a grid with three columns.*
Label the columns, Weekly, Monthly, Annually.
2. *Ask help from the Holy Spirit*
Ask that God’s Spirit might help us look at our actions and attitudes and help us to understand the intentions and motivations of our hearts. Ask that the Spirit would shape our thinking and decisions.
3. *Based on results of the prayer of Examen, prayerfully consider where and how will we journey together this year. (The “Resource Options” on the following pages might be helpful as you plan)*

a. What will we do?	c. When will we do it?	e. When will we begin?
b. Where will we go?	d. Why are we doing it?	f. Post these on the grid
4. *Prayerfully consider how will we do it.*

a. Who will be present?	b. Where will we give opportunity for voice?
c. How will we share story?	d. What resources will be needed?

e. Who is responsible? (The persons identified here will be responsible for 1, 2 & 3 below)

 1. How will those present be engaged?
 2. How will we give opportunity for voice?
 3. How will we seek the voice of God together?
5. *Prayerful Review (You may want to provide some space here before coming back to review)*

a. Ask for clarity and affirmation	b. Review and adjust
c. Thank God for where you have come	

INVITE

Approaches

Here are a couple of potential ways to invite the congregation into a journey of discipleship. Both use the same resources the only difference is the order in which they are used.

1. Begin with exploratory small groups or a prayer retreat and then have an Invitation to GROW service in which you share the invitation to GROW.
2. Begin with the Invitation to GROW worship service and then use the other resources as part of the plan for living into GROW.

Invite Resources

Invitation to GROW card

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/invitation-to-grow/>

Invitation to GROW Booklet for children

Parent Mentor Guide

Teachers Guide

Response Card

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/my-grow-adventure/>

Using GROW Resources

<http://www.covchurch.org/discipleship/files/2014/02/Using-the-Invitation-to-GROW-card-download.pdf>

Preparing for Invitation to GROW Service

<http://www.covchurch.org/discipleship/files/2014/02/Using-the-Invitation-to-GROW-card-download.pdf>

Invitation to GROW Service

<http://www.covchurch.org/discipleship/files/2014/02/Invitation-to-GROW-service.pdf>

Exploring the Discipleship Journey

Adult Youth Resource

GROW Exploration

<http://covbooks.com/products/grow-bible-study-english>

Prayer Retreats

<http://www.covchurch.org/discipleship/prayer/retreats/>

GROW

Sustaining Growth

We can begin with good intentions but sustaining spiritual growth throughout the year takes intentionality in order for new practices to become a natural part of our lives individually and as a body.

1. Pray for spiritual growth

- a. Pray as a staff
- b. Pray as church leadership
- c. Pray as families
- d. Pray as a congregation in worship and whenever there is a gathering

2. Keep the plan in front of the body

- a. Keep inviting the body to enter into GROW and the supporting ministries
- b. Keep reminding the body of God's desire for us to GROW and the ways and ministries that are available to help us GROW
- c. Keep identifying elements of growth within the sermon

3. Live into the plan

- a. Encourage participation in a GROW Retreat, GROW groups, or GROW practices
- b. Help foster communion with God when approaching scripture
- c. Encourage an attentiveness to the Spirit in every relationship
- d. Encourage participation in serving the community
- e. Engage and give voice to the generations in worship while fostering attentiveness to the Spirit.
- f. Affirm the progress that is being made

4. Celebrate the unfolding story

- a. Gather church staff and leaders for quarterly reflections on their spiritual journey.
- b. Encourage leaders to give short testimonies of their GROW journey at church leadership, and committee meetings.
- c. Encourage families, couples and individuals to daily share the story of their walk with Christ
- d. Videotape members of all ages sharing the joys and struggles of living into their Invitation to GROW. These can be used during a worship service, retreat or posted on your website to be viewed by others.
- e. Ask one person or family to share their story of living into God's invitation to GROW each month during worship.
- f. Plan for an annual GROW celebration service. Celebrate the spiritual growth that has transpired over the past year and respond to a new invitation for the upcoming year.



Resources Options

For Planning and Implementation

Planning Resources

Developing and Sustaining Small Groups

Teaching and Learning

Mentoring and Coaching

<http://www.covchurch.org/adults/intentional-discipleship>

Group, Mentoring and Individual Resources

GROW / CRECER (English and Spanish)

<http://covbooks.com/products/grow-bible-study-english>

<http://covbooks.com/products/crecer>

Real Life Field Guide Adults and Youth

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/?s=Real+Life+Field+Guide>

Journey for Youth and Adults

<http://covbooks.com/products/journey-new-testament>

<http://covbooks.com/products/journey-old-testament>

<http://covbooks.com/products/journey-leaders-guide>

<http://covbooks.com/products/journey-for-adults>

Rock Solid: Exploring Faith Foundations for Youth and Adults

<https://www.covchurch.org/resources/rock-solid/>

Exploring God's Word

<https://www.covchurch.org/resources/exploring-gods-word/>

New Life in Christ (English and Spanish)

<https://www.covchurch.org/resources/new-life-in-christ/>

GROWing Deeper Spiritual Practices

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/growing-deeper-practices/>

Parenting Resources

Journey Parent Mentor Guide

<http://covbooks.com/products/the-journey-parent-mentor-guide-and-audiobook>

MY GROW Adventure with God Parent/Mentor Guide

<https://www.covchurch.org/resources/my-grow-adventure/>

Parents as Spiritual Mentors

Praying with Children

Bible Reading Plans

<http://www.covchurch.org/children/parents/>

Missional Moms

<http://www.covchurch.org/missionalmoms/>

Outward Action Resources

Advocacy for Victims of Abuse (AVA)

<http://www.covchurch.org/abuse/>

Invitation to Racial Righteousness

<https://www.covchurch.org/resources/invitation-to-racial-righteousness/>

Kids Helping Kids

<https://www.covchurch.org/relief/projects/special/childrens-service-project/>

Kids Congo

<http://www.covchurch.org/covenantkidscongo/>

Human Trafficking PROTECT Booklet

<http://www.covchurch.org/trafficking/protect-booklet/>

Sankofa Journey: 72 Hour interactive cross-racial prayer journey

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/sankofa-journey/>

Sharing Story Resources

Your Story (English and Spanish)

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/your-story/>

Telling Your Story

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/files/2010/05/Telling-Your-Story-for-web.pdf>

Worship Resources

Week of Prayer (English, Spanish and Korean)

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/truly-praying/>

Breathe: Personal Approaches to Deepening Journey with God

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/?s=breathe>

Prayer retreats: <http://www.covchurch.org/discipleship/prayer/retreats/>

Moment-to-Moment: An Invitation to Prayer

Streams and Pathways: An Exploration of Spiritual Practices

Journeying Together: An Introduction to Spiritual Companionship

Teacher Resources for Children

Children's Ministry Planning Tool

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/childrens-planning-tool/>

My GROW Adventure with God Teachers Guide

<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/my-grow-adventure/>

Adventures with God Children's curriculum includes GROW exploration
<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/adventures-with-god/>