

Stages of Discipleship

A breakdown of where to take a new friend.

Stage one: **Build**

- *Initial Conversation*--Find or create an opportunity to meet new people. Ask good questions, smile, and create trust. Recognize "open doors" for conversation and relationship to develop natural, or create an opportunity to draw in new people.
- *Just be you*--Don't hide your faith in Jesus. If you are a Christian, your faith will reveal itself by your values and how you spend your time. You don't have to be overt; you can ask if they are a Christian, or you can share that you are involved in a church or Chi Alpha.

Stage two: **Fellowship**

- *Make a memory* -- Parlay your first conversation or two into something more meaningful. Relationships are built on memories and memories will form into a friendship. Find a unique (or even dangerous) activity to experience together. Some examples are, camping, road trips, or any spontaneous adventure.
- *Demonstrate your faith* --- Be intentional about exemplifying God's grace and character. It's important that you include other believers with whom you share a common understanding. A new friend will see how the two of you talk about God and about how your faith plays a significant role in your life. You can take opportunities serve and honor your new friend at this time.

Stage three: **Grow in Christ**

- *Share stories* -- You will be able to have conversations with your new friend about more meaningful things. Take the lead in sharing about your own life. Soon, they will open up about how they feel about their parents, their identity, their future and past. Significant trust is formed when each of you begin to move past the surface into a genuine friendship. (Some people may never have known a friend like this before)
- *Discover God's story* -- You can now begin to talk about the nature and character of God in a direct way. Read scripture and discuss it. Ask them what they think and believe about God. If your friend is a Christian, this is when you learn their extended testimony and develop a devotional life. If your friend is not a Christian, this is when you ask them if they'd like to become one. Help them understand and respond to the gospel. It's also an excellent time to teach them about the Holy Spirit.

Stage four: **Train and Send Out**

- *Entrust ownership* --- Empower your friend to "buy in" to the cause; help them learn to reach out to others. Ask them to reach out to someone new, to organize an activity, or lead the discussion at an upcoming life group meeting. Teach them how to have quality conversations with strangers and how to invite them into their life.
- *Teach them to take spiritual responsibility* -- Share about who God is calling them to be. They may have never recognized it before you tell them. Emphasize the importance of fighting for the Kingdom--for the lost souls in their life. Help them to realize the responsibility that Christians carry as Christ's ambassadors. Help them step into leadership.

Narrative of Discipleship

A story of where I took a new friend

In the Beginning...

I was still pretty new at it all—serving as a life group leader. Others may have perceived me as a veteran, but really, I had only led a life group for a couple of years, and even those weren't as sharp as I had hoped they'd be. I just kept at it anyway.

One day, after one of our weekly services, I met a new guy named Freddy. He and I didn't really have a ton in common. He was from the inner-city, and I was from the suburbs. He was Latino, and I was white. Each of us came from different life experiences so we didn't really have a lot in common to start from. In our first couple conversations, I just asked him lots of questions—questions about his family, about his major, that sort of thing. I learned a lot about him, probably more than he thought he was telling me. I don't know that I was overt about sharing my beliefs with him at first, but he definitely knew that I was active about my faith in Jesus. I learned that he came from a sort of Christian background, but it hadn't taken root in his life yet.

But then...

After about six months into our friendship, Freddy decided to join me on one of my favorite adventures, a road trip! There was a service project in Kentucky where I had to spend a week at the end of the summer. Freddy and a few other guys had become faithful friends in my life group over the past half-year, and the four of us decided to plan a detour on the way to the project—a baseball game in St. Louis! What's amazing is that I was the only one who cared anything at all about the game, but for the sake of adventure they came along with me.

This excursion turned out to be one of the most memorable and meaningful few days ever. We talked about everything on the road, from our favorite music, to relationship advice, to the discoveries of our relationship with God. To this day, I think joyfully about that experience, and I think the other guys do too.

And after that...

The trip brought a real sense of bonding between me and Freddy. I don't think there was one conversation or moment in particular that did it, but from that point on we could talk about anything. He allowed me access to some of the most personal things in his life and I did the same for him. We started to talk about the Bible together and what we were learning. It was amazing to me to see Freddy become so eager about his newly forming faith in Jesus. I'm not sure when or where it happened, but something had clearly changed in Freddy's life and he was noticeably different than when I first met him. He didn't have all the answers to life's questions yet, but he now seemed to live with a new sense of purpose—like his life mattered differently than it did before.

Freddy seemed to crave new opportunities to serve Jesus. In fact, he tended to overserve (we even had to talk about that once or twice). He was always super receptive to what I had to say, even if he didn't understand it at first. Freddy started to go on mission trips, serve on the worship team at his new church, and he was Baptized with the Holy Spirit during his own personal prayer time. At this point I began to wonder if there was anything my friend wouldn't say "yes" to if Jesus asked him.

Finally...

After a few years, Freddy had grown a confident man of God! He began to lead others whom he had met for himself. One thing that was especially impressive to me was how ridiculously determined he was to teach other guys—often stubborn ones—about how to personally know Jesus. He was just as new (if not newer) than I was when I had first met him, yet he was undeterred about sharing his faith with others.

So many people have been impacted by Freddy's ministry—yes Freddy! My young wandering friend from so many years ago. His ministry has brought the love of Christ to many people, and I don't expect that to change.