

IMPRINT GROUPS: PHILOSOPHY & MISSION

DISCIPLESHIP AND THE MISSION OF IMPRINT

In some of His last words to his followers before His ascension, Jesus gave both encouragement and instruction in what is known as the Great Commission: *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* (Matthew 28:18-20). The creation, instruction, and multiplication of disciples of Jesus has been central to the global church’s calling since its birth.

In recognition of this calling, Imprint Church’s mission is ***to make and multiply grateful and generous disciples through the Gospel of Jesus Christ***. Discipleship is at the core of the mission of the global church and it is at the core of Imprint Church. Thus it is critical that we align every activity, program, and initiative with the goal of creating, instructing, and multiplying disciples.

DEFINING DISCIPLE AND DISCIPLESHIP

A disciple is one who follows or apprentices themselves to another for the sake of nearness, understanding, and imitation. So to be a disciple of Jesus is to be **one who seeks to grow in love for, knowledge of, and obedience to Jesus with the goal of becoming more like Him**. Discipleship is not an optional element of the Christian life, it is the spiritual and practical outworking of the Christian life.

In light of this definition, discipleship is understood to be the **active process of orienting one’s thoughts, affections, and actions towards Jesus in pursuit of Christlikeness**. Discipleship is done both individually by believers as they seek to grow more like Jesus and corporately by church communities as they seek “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12).

In Short:

- Disciple (Identity): One who follows Jesus with the goal of loving, knowing, and obeying Him.
- Discipleship (Action): The process of spiritual formation directed towards Christlikeness.

HOLISTIC DISCIPLESHIP: HEAD, HEART, AND HANDS

Discipleship cannot be reduced to a single activity or program of a church. Humans are complex and discipleship must be a whole-person process. Our heads, hearts, and hands must all be engaged in the pursuit of Christlikeness. While there is inevitable overlap between these categories and goals this paradigm is a helpful way of understanding holistic discipleship:

	Head	Heart	Hands
Imprint’s Mission	Gospel	Gratitude	Generosity
Goal	Know God and Know Self	Worship God and Love Others	Obey God and Serve Others
Process	Deepen understanding of God’s character through Scripture and theology and understand how one’s own unique story intersects with God’s greater story.	In response to the Gospel, worship God with love and devotion, casting aside idols, and engage in Gospel-saturated fellowship with other disciples.	Fueled by our understanding and love of God, engage in the practices and disciplines of the faith and live on mission, serving your city, community, and world for the glory of God.

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IMPRINT GROUPS: DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH FELLOWSHIP

Imprint Groups contribute to the mission of Imprint Church *to make and multiply grateful and generous disciples through the Gospel of Jesus Christ* by providing small gathering spaces for disciples of all stages to regularly practice hospitality, Gospel-saturated fellowship, prayer, and generosity alongside one another.

There is flexibility around how Imprint Groups can operate regarding the day of the week, the time of day, frequency of meeting, and number of attendees; however, the mission and culture of each Imprint Group should be oriented around:

- **Small Gathering Spaces:** Imprint Groups should be spaces where people can know and be known for the sake of discipleship. A group should consist of around 8-16 adult believers that are committed to consistent attendance and participation.
- **Disciples of All Stages:** Groups should be places where someone who has been following Jesus for a week can sit side by side with someone who has been following Jesus for decades. Likewise they should be places where a young family can sit side by side with empty-nesters to serve, bless, and learn from one another.
- **Hospitality:** Imprint Groups are spaces in which members welcome one another into their lives and homes with food and fellowship. They are spaces where people can practice the “one another” commands from Scripture to love, bear with, honor, and build up one another. The posture of the group should be one of familial openness; as the number of disciples in our church family grows and multiplies, so our Imprint Groups should expect to grow in both size and number.
- **Gospel-Saturated Fellowship:** The Imprint Group’s time around the table or couches should be devoted to applying the Gospel and the week’s sermon to the lives of the individual believers. The relationships and trust formed through consistent fellowship should allow the group members to be able to speak into one another’s lives to challenge, encourage, convict, or comfort.
- **Prayer:** Imprint Groups should be praying groups. Time should be devoted in each meeting to both gathering prayer requests from the members and to lifting one another up in prayer.
- **Generosity:** Each Imprint Group should have a missional focus and outlet. Each group’s leaders and members should find ways in which they can generously serve their communities and cities using the unique gifting and interests within the group. Imprint Groups should strive to have a generosity project they collectively participate in at least twice a year that serves and blesses the broader community in some way.

Of the three primary areas of discipleship, Imprint Groups are designed to build up the Heart of a disciple, with Head and Hands being strengthened as a result. They are not education spaces or Bible Studies primarily designed to impart knowledge and they are not volunteer teams primarily dedicated to serving. They are first and foremost spaces of hospitality and fellowship in which disciples can grow in Heart, in love for one another. Then, as an overflow and result of that growth, the Head is engaged through discussion and application of Scripture and the Hands are engaged through missional service.

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IMPRINT GROUPS: STRUCTURE AND LOGISTICS

Qualifications for Group Leadership: Group leaders are expected to share Imprint's core convictions about church health and doctrine and embody the character standards expected of an Imprint Ministry Leader (1 Timothy 3:8-13). They must have regularly attended Imprint Church for over 6 months and be recommended by a Pastor, a Staff Lead, a Ministry Team Lead, or another Group Leader.

Training Group Leaders: An All-Location Group Leader training will occur in August in preparation for the next year of Imprint Groups. Mid-year check-ins and trainings will during the months of February or March - these may be all-location or location specific.

Annual Rhythms: Imprint Groups have an annual rhythm that follows the school year calendar with regular meetings (either weekly or bi-weekly) from September to Mid December and January to June. Groups can meet informally over the summer as desired. Leaders will be asked to commit to a year of leadership before each new school year begins.

Group Growth: Group Signups will take place during the Fall and Spring. During the 2-3 week signup period, those at Imprint looking to grow in discipleship through fellowship will have the opportunity to step into new or existing Imprint Groups. After the signup period ends, leaders and members will spend the remainder of the Fall and Spring months investing in the people and relationships within their Imprint Groups. Special circumstances may allow for the addition of new members to a Group outside of the defined signup windows; during these circumstances the Discipleship Lead and Group Leaders will work closely together to ensure an addition is healthy for the new individual/family and the Group.

New Group Creation: There are two ways new Imprint Groups can be created:

- **Multiplication (Preferred):** As a group grows in size over the years through its culture of hospitality, it may outgrow the capacities of the leaders to effectively lead or it may outgrow the location in which it's hosted. At that point, apprentice leaders in the group who have been equipped and trained by the leaders should work to plant a new Imprint Group with at least 4-6 of the members of the existing group and open their doors for new members. Multiplications can happen at any point in the annual rhythm of a group, but can also be scheduled to take place at the next year's Imprint Group kickoff in the Fall.
- **Generation:** As qualified leaders emerge from the church, they can be trained by the Discipleship Lead and at least one Imprint Group leader and empowered to launch a net-new Imprint Group. The new leader should have 4-6 adults in mind as their core starting group as they plant; the Discipleship Lead and members of the new group can work on growing and multiplying out from that core.