



Discipleship Group (D-Group) Leader Training

1. The Need for Discipleship Groups (D-Groups)

- At Crossgate Church, everything is grounded in our Purpose, Priorities, and Key Messaging.
- Our Purpose: “We make more and better disciples for Jesus Christ.”
- Our Community Priority: “We share community with other Christ followers by encouraging one another through relationships of love, trust, authenticity, and transparency.”
- Our Definition of a Disciple: “A disciple is a growing follower of Jesus, who lives and loves like Jesus and leads others to follow him.”
- LifeGroups are the foundational contexts for pursuing these goals. D-Groups are excellent supplemental venues for pursuing these goals and developing “better disciples” at an optimal level.

2. What’s the difference between a LifeGroup and a D-Group?

	LifeGroup	D-Group
Size	8-12 people	4-5 people
Gender	Co-ed or same gender	Same gender
Open or Closed Group	Open (can invite new people at any time) or closed (no new adds; group begins with a certain number and keeps that number)	Closed (no new adds; group begins with a certain number and keeps that number)
Open-ended or Closed-ended	Open groups are open-ended (no predetermined end); closed groups are closed-ended (pre-determined time to multiply the group or “send” some members to start a new group)	Closed-ended (group ends 18-24 months after it begins and members replicate the process)
Where and when	On-campus or off-campus	Off-campus (preferred) or on-campus
Level of transparency/ accountability	Moderate	Deep

3. How to Start a D-Group

- D-Group Leader is vetted and trained:
 - Crossgate Member and LifeGroup Member.
 - Read *Replicate* by Robby Gallaty and attend D-Group Leader Training.
 - Ideally, D-Group leaders will come from replicating D-Groups and have a recommendation from their current D-Group leader. If a prospective leader has not previously participated in a D-Group at Crossgate, they must observe at least 1 meeting of an established D-Group and be approved by the Next Steps Pastor.

- D-Group Leader forms a D-Group:
 - Leader prayerfully invites 3-4 other Jesus followers of their gender *whom they already know* to join the group; total group size of 4 (leader and 3 other members) is ideal, but group can be 5 total (leader and 4 other members). D-Groups are not intended for non-Christians.
 - Leader explains the scope of the group to each prospective member: (1) not a traditional “Bible study,” but a *season for accelerated spiritual transformation*, (2) same-gender group, (3) 4-5 members total, (4) closed-ended group (18-24 months), (5) group replicates at the end of 18-24 months, (6) group meets weekly for 90 minutes.
 - First group meeting:
 - Use the ***Spiritual Journey Inventory*** for members to get to know each other better and set the tone for transparency and authenticity
 - Leader shares his/her personal testimony with the group (how they were saved and what God is doing in their lives now), then ask members to prepare their testimonies for the next meeting
 - Explain the regular meeting format and demonstrate the ***H.E.A.R. method***
 - Discuss the Crossgate Bible Engagement Plan and why reading one chapter per day with journaling is ideal.
 - Explain the Scripture memory plan (using the Crossgate Bible Engagement Plan)
 - Discuss the need for the group to identify which accountability questions it will use in addition to the Core Accountability Questions (see list below)
 - Discuss the supplemental study book (whether incorporating it right away or waiting a few months to introduce it)
 - Members sign ***D-Group Covenant***
 - Second group meeting:
 - Other members share their personal testimonies (how they were saved and what God is doing in their lives now)
 - Leader ensures that everyone understands the expectations for the first “regular” meeting (review meeting format, etc)
 - Confirm accountability questions as a group
 - Members sign D-Group Covenant if not signed at first meeting

- Regular weekly meetings (90 minutes):
 - Begin with prayer (one person pray)
 - Recite memory verses
 - Discuss accountability questions
 - Share personal insights from H.E.A.R. journal entries and how God has spoken during the week
 - Discuss supplemental study book (see options list below)
 - Share prayer needs for the upcoming week
 - End in sustained prayer (each person prays, maybe more than once)
- Staying connected throughout the week:
 - We suggest creating a GroupMe or Group Text to stay connected to your group members throughout the week. You can share prayer requests, insights from your reading, and general encouragement. This also helps ensure everyone is staying on track with their reading/journaling.

4. Other Matters

- Accountability questions:
 - All D-Groups will include the following Core Accountability Questions:
 - Have you spent **quality time** daily with God in reading your Bible and in prayer this week? (Matthew 4:4; Luke 18:1-8)
 - What Gospel Conversations have you had this week—invited someone to church, shared your story, or shared the Gospel with call to respond? (Acts 1:8; Colossians 4:3-4)
 - What have you personally struggled with this week? (Galatians 6:2)
 - Other accountability questions:
 - Groups should consider additional accountability questions that meet the needs of the group, but should avoid having too many accountability questions because answering the questions will take too much time. Rotating through different questions each week is a good idea.
 - A few suggested questions:
 - How have you honored the Lord with your wealth and the first-fruits of your increase this week? (Proverbs 3:9-10)
 - When was the last time you invested in the next generation at Crossgate Church? (Matthew 19:14)
 - Have you had any lustful attitudes, exposed yourself to any sexually explicit materials that would not glorify God, or put yourself in any situations that would give even the appearance of immorality? (Matthew 5:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:22)
 - How have you invested emotionally and spiritually in your spouse and children this week? (Ephesians 5:25, 6:4)

- D-Group Check-ins:
 - Once every 6 months, D-Groups should complete a “check in” during one of their regular meetings to monitor the progress of the group. Leaders should use this as an opportunity to evaluate what is going well, what could be improved, and remind their group members to continue praying about replicating the group.

- Hang Outs & Alternate meetings:
 - D-Groups should plan 1-2 “hang outs” per year where they can gather outside of their regular meeting time and place. This serves as an opportunity to build stronger relationships. Examples include a backyard bbq, fishing trip, family dinner, etc.
 - Once every 2-3 months, D-Groups should have an “alternate” meeting where the group doesn’t conduct a “regular” meeting but focuses on a specific topic related to discipleship.
 - Alternate topics for D-Groups include:
 - Best practices for having a quiet time with God
 - How to have Gospel Conversations
 - How to write and share your salvation testimony in two minutes
 - The practice of fasting
 - Making the most of spiritual journaling

- Leader development – other group members will facilitate the meeting/discussion occasionally (for example, one meeting per month can be facilitated by another member)

- Supplemental study books (suggested):
 - **Charles Kelley, *The Baptist Faith and Message***
 - Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials*
 - Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life*
 - Victor Raymond Edman *They Found the Secret*
 - Brandon Cook, *Learning to Live and Love Like Jesus*
 - Adrian Rogers, *What Every Christian Ought to Know*
 - Bill Hull, *The Discipleship Gospel*
 - John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*
 - John Piper, *God’s Passion for His Glory*

5. Administrative oversight – Crossgate’s Next Steps Pastor and Ministries Assistant provide oversight and keeps records of D-Groups (leader, members, time and place of meeting). Please email keith@crossgate.org or tula@crossgate.org if you are interested in starting or joining a D-Group or with questions about your existing group.

6. Q&A

D-Group Frequently Asked Questions

What is a D-Group?

A D-Group is gender-specific closed group of 4 to 5 believers (including the leader) who meet together weekly for the purpose of accelerated spiritual transformation. A person joins the D-Group by invitation only.

While LifeGroups exist for the purpose of community growth and fellowship, they have an underlying additional purpose (or they should have): evangelism. LifeGroups are designed to reach lost people by getting them involved in the group. A D-Group, on the other hand, consists of believers who desire a deeper walk with Christ. It is not evangelistic in its form or function, but in its fruit: it makes *better* disciples who will then go on to make *more* disciples.

The format of a D-Group is not one of a teacher-student, but a roundtable discussion. In their book *The Invested Life*, Joel Rosenberg and T.E. Koshy suggest that a discipleship relationship is “more personal, more practical, and more powerful. A teacher shares information, while a discipler shares life; a teacher aims for the head, while a discipler aims for the heart; a teacher measures knowledge, while a discipler measures faith; a teacher is an authority, while a discipler is a servant; and a teacher says, ‘Listen to me,’ while a discipler says, ‘Follow me.’” This blueprint, sketched by Jesus Christ through His personal example, is how discipleship is accomplished in the lives of believers, and, ultimately, within the local church. When this plan is followed, those involved will participate in three dynamics that result in growth in their personal lives, as well as in the Kingdom: community, accountability, and multiplication.

How do I find a D-Group?

Ideally, making disciples in a D-Group flows out of the LifeGroups. LifeGroups, which form out of the Worship Gathering, are the “fishing ponds” for D-Groups. As people form friendships and bonds in LifeGroups, handfuls of them will decide to take the next step and begin a discipleship journey together in a D-Group.

If you would like to be in a D-Group, the first step on the pathway is to join a LifeGroup. If you are currently in a LifeGroup and desire to be in a D-Group, talk to your LifeGroup leader.

How do I lead a D-Group?

The only absolute requirement for leading a D-Group is that you be intentionally pursuing Christ. You do not need to be a master teacher or have all of the answers; you do not need to be able to say, “Listen to me.” If you can say, “Follow me; I’m pursuing Christ,” you have the tools you need to lead a D-Group.

As a D-Group leader, you set the tone for the group's atmosphere. You are not lecturing students; you are cultivating an intimate, accountable relationship with a few close friends. Joel Rosenberg and T.E. Koshy wrote in their book *The Invested Life* that the discipleship relationship is "more personal, more practical, and more powerful. A teacher shares information, while a discipler aims for the heart; a teacher measures knowledge, while a discipler measures faith; a teacher is an authority, while a discipler is a servant; and a teacher says, 'Listen to me,' while a discipler says, 'Follow me.'"

How do I choose disciples?

The first step in establishing a formal disciple-making relationship is choosing disciples. Jesus, our example in selecting disciples, spent time in prayer before selecting men (Luke 6:12-16). The word disciple means learner. Begin by asking God to send you a group of men or women who have a desire to learn and grow.

When people approached Jesus about becoming His disciples, our Lord held a high standard. One man said, "I'll follow you, but let me go bury my father." Now, the man's father had not yet died—the man was reaching for an excuse to postpone the kind of commitment that Jesus expected of him. Jesus responded with something that the man would have understood to mean, "You can't do that. The kingdom is too important."

Your D-Group should consist of F.A.I.T.H. believers: Faithful, Available, Intentional, Teachable and Hungry. A faithful person is dedicated, trustworthy, and committed. Consider a potential disciple's faithfulness by observing other areas of his/her spiritual life, such as church attendance, LifeGroup involvement, or service in the church. Faithfulness is determined by a commitment to spiritual things.

Discern an individual's availability by his willingness to meet with and invest in others. Does this person carve out time to listen, study, and learn from others? Is he accessible when called upon? Does she have a regular quiet time with God of reading the Word and praying? Availability is measured by a willingness to serve God.

Someone who is intentional does things on purpose and with a purpose. They are serious about growing spiritually and willing to put in the work necessary for growth.

Not everybody who attends a LifeGroup is teachable. A teachable person has a desire to learn and apply what is taught. One who is teachable is open to correction. Recognize teachability by observing one's response to God's Word. For example, after hearing a sermon on prayer, do they begin to pray more regularly? Or after a lesson about the dangers of the tongue, does the person implement changes in their speech? A teachable person not only listens to what is taught, but also applies it to his or her life.

Finally, candidates for your D-Group should be hungry for growth. The idea of diving into and engaging God's word should excite and motivate them. The last thing you want in your D-Group is

someone who does not really want to be there. Look for people who are hungry to avoid this problem.

After discerning that an individual is faithful, available, intentional, teachable, and hungry; prayerfully approach him or her and ask, *"Would you be interested in studying the Bible, memorizing Scripture, and praying together?"* Many people are open to that. All you have to do is ask. We don't recommend that you say, *"Would you like for me to disciple you?"* as this question may come across in a derogatory manner. Keep in mind that men should disciple men, and women should disciple women.

How many people should be in the group?

Because accountability works well in a smaller setting, the ideal size of a disciple-making group is 4 to 5 – you and 3 to 4 other people. We recommend that you do not have more than 5, and remember that a one-on-one relationship is not ideal.

Where should we meet?

Ideally, groups will find a meeting place away from the church. Restaurants, coffee shops, bookstores, diners, and homes are all good options. Meeting outside the church in the community encourages your group members to publicize their faith, teaching them it is okay to read the Bible at a restaurant or pray in public. Be sure to select a place that is convenient to all group members.

If lack of childcare is an issue, you should consider meeting on-campus when children's ministry is being offered, like Wednesday evenings.

How often should we meet?

You should plan to meet once a week for about an hour and a half. You can meet more frequently, but it is important that you meet at least once a week. This schedule does not prohibit those you are discipling from calling you throughout the week or coming by for counsel when needed. It is important to remember that discipleship is about the relationship between you and your group members, not about checking a requirement box. Disciple-making is a way of life, not a program.

Is there an attendance requirement?

Yes, and it is not negotiable. The first time I meet with a potential group, I explain the disciple-making covenant with them. Since we're going to spend our lives together for the next eighteen to twenty-four months, I want to know if they are committed. Some people have said after the initial meeting, *"Uh, this isn't really for me. I'm not interested."* That's okay. I allow potential disciples to opt out of the group on the front end after understanding the expectations spelled out in the disciple-making covenant. Remember, you are looking for people who want to be disciplined, people who have a desire to grow and learn. An unwillingness to commit reveals that they are not ready to be in a D-Group. It's the example Jesus set for us.

What do D-Group meetings look like?

Here are some elements that your weekly meetings can include:

Open with prayer.

Quote your Scripture memory verses for the week.

Share HEAR journal entries from the week. The goal of studying the Bible is to apply the Word of God to your life and respond in obedience. Remember, knowledge without application is useless information.

Here are some good application and response questions to utilize:

- What are you hearing from God, and what are you doing about it?
- What is God teaching you, and how is it affecting your life?
- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there an action or attitude to avoid?
- Is there a principle to apply?

Based on time available, you may not be able to have everyone share all of their journal entries. Consider asking each member to share 1 or 2 of the entries that really stood out.

Spend a few moments asking questions and keeping each other accountable using the provided accountability questions. All accountability should be saturated with grace, not legalism. When it comes to accountability, you can't expect what you don't inspect.

Discuss the supplemental study book, if applicable.

Share prayer requests and close with prayer.

How do I challenge my D-Group to memorize Scripture?

Proverbs 25:11 says, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver." How many times has a Scripture come to mind when you needed just the right words in a situation? Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would bring to remembrance all that He said (John 14:26). Those passages of Scripture we have memorized will be brought to our memory at the right moment – but we must learn them.

Group members will memorize Scripture if you hold them accountable through reciting verses to one another at every meeting. Chapter 8 of *Growing Up* by Robby Gallaty contains a thorough explanation and a practical system for Scripture memorization.

Should I disciple unbelievers?

The preferred method is a gathering of born-again believers seeking to grow in their faith. How can you determine if someone is saved or not? We recommend beginning every new group by asking each person to share their testimony with the others. Next, ask them to explain the gospel. A great resource for anyone struggling with belief in Christ is Greg Gilbert's book, *What is the Gospel?*

When should I ask someone to leave the D-Group?

These are some reasons for asking someone to leave the group: they don't possess a teachable spirit, they are not faithful in attending meetings, they are not completing assigned work and putting in the kind of effort you require, they are living a lifestyle of blatant and unrepentant sin, etc.

Teachability is an indispensable quality for growth. One situation where someone may be asked to leave is if he or she monopolizes the group discussion week after week. It will be obvious they want to demonstrate their superior knowledge of The Word rather than learn from interacting with others.

Additionally, laziness will breed complacency in the group. Missing meetings, refusing to memorize Scripture, failing to log HEAR journal entries, or sitting idly by during discussion times lowers the morale of the others in the group. This type of behavior must be addressed immediately. Meet with this individual privately to inquire about his or her attitude and actions. Remind him or her of the commitment made at the outset of the discipleship relationship.

Like Jesus' relationship with His disciples, ours is a serious relationship as well: a relationship built upon a mutual commitment to Christ and each other. Sadly, some will not follow through with that commitment, forcing you to lovingly confront them about their unfaithfulness.

What if I don't know the answer to a question?

There is no shame in not knowing all of the answers to every question. Simply confess that you may not have all the answers, but you will find them. Then, do so before the next meeting. Ask your pastor or another spiritual leader to help you with the answer. Never give the impression that you have all the answers.

When do I send out disciples to make disciples?

Always begin with the end in mind. Your group should meet for 18 to 24 months, and they should expect that final date from the very beginning. Some groups develop a closer bond, which results in accelerated growth; others take longer. We do not recommend meeting for longer than 24 months. Some group members will desire to leave the group and begin their own groups. Others, however, will want to remain in the comfort zone of the existing group. Remember, the goal is for the group to replicate their lives into someone else.

The H.E.A.R. Method

How to complete a HEAR Journal

The acronym **H.E.A.R.** stands for **Highlight, Explain, Apply, and Respond**. Each of these four steps contributes to creating an atmosphere to hear God speak.

For an illustration, let's assume that you begin your quiet time in the book of 2 Timothy, and today's reading is the first chapter of the book. Before reading the text, pause to sincerely ask God to speak to you. It may seem trite, but it is absolutely imperative that we seek God's guidance in order to understand His Word (1 Corinthians 2:12-14). Every time we open our Bibles, we should pray the simple prayer that David prayed: *"Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law (Word)"* (Psalm 119:18).

After praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance, open your notebook or journal, and at the top left-hand corner, write the letter H. This exercise will remind you to read with a purpose. In the course of your reading, one or two verses will usually stand out and speak to you. After reading the passage of Scripture, **HIGHLIGHT** each verse that speaks to you by copying it under the letter "H". Write out the following:

- The name of the book
- The passage of Scripture
- The chapter and verse numbers that especially speak to you
- A title to describe the passage

After you have highlighted the passage, write the letter "E" under the previous entry. At this stage, you will **EXPLAIN** what the text means. By asking some simple questions, with the help of God's Spirit, you can understand the meaning of a passage or verse. Here are a few questions to get you started:

Why was this written?

To whom was it originally written?

How does it fit with the verses before and after it?

Why did the Holy Spirit include this passage in the book?

What is He intending to communicate through this text?

After writing a short summary of what you think the text means, write the letter "A" below the letter "E". Under the "A", write the word **APPLY**. The application is the heart of the process. As you have done before, answer a series of questions to uncover the significance of these verses to you personally, questions like:

How can this help me?

What does this mean today?

What would the application of this verse look like in my life?

What does this mean to me?

What is God saying to me?

Finally, below the first three entries, write the letter "R" for **RESPOND**. This is the last part of the HEAR Journal. Your response to the passage may take on many forms. You may write a call to action. You may describe how you will be different because of what God has said to you through His Word. You may indicate what you are going to do because of what you have learned. You may respond by writing out a prayer to God. For example, you may ask God to help you to be more loving, or to give you a desire to be more generous in your giving. Keep in mind that this is your response to what you have just read. Try to be specific in your response and be prepared to ask your Discipleship Group to hold you accountable to any commitments that you make.

Spiritual Journey Inventory

- My first recollection of being in church was _____.
- The closest I have felt to God in my life was _____.
- The farthest I felt from God was _____.
- If I could change one incident in my life it would be _____. Why?
- If I could thank God for one person in my life, it would be _____. Why?
- The turning point in my relationship with God was _____. Why?
- Now, prepare to share your salvation testimony with the group.

Disciplemaking Covenant

- I pledge myself fully to the Lord with the anticipation that I am entering a time of accelerated spiritual transformation.
- I will meet with my D-Group for approximately one and one-half hours every week, unless providentially hindered.
- I will complete all assignments on a weekly basis before my D-Group meeting, in order to contribute to the discussion.
- I will contribute to an atmosphere of confidentiality, honesty, and transparency for the edification of others in the group as well as my own spiritual growth.
- I will pray every week for the other men/women who are on the discipleship journey with me.
- I will begin praying about replicating the discipleship process upon completion of this group.

Signed Mentee _____

Signed Mentor _____

Date _____