

# Women Discipleship Guidebook





# **WOMEN DISCIPLESHIP GUIDEBOOK**

*To the women who long to invest their lives in the lives of others.*

*He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.  
Colossians 1:28*

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## INTRODUCTION

I want to thank all my sisters in Christ who have walked alongside with me. I am grateful for Mimi, my mentor from church, who underlines the importance of discipleship in following Christ. She taught, showed and modeled it to her disciples (2 Timothy 3:10). Her investment in my life has imprinted a vision and a conviction to disciple other women as part of my mission and way of life.

I also learned a lot from my dear sisters at church, their examples have increased my understanding of the discipleship model I share in this guidebook. I am very thankful for their kindness and friendships.

In the years before, I was growing with other believers but mostly in loose mentoring relationships or in big bible study groups. The concept of discipleship was a vague notion, I knew it's important to do, but I didn't know exactly what and how.

There are many models of discipleship relationships. The one I have been exposed to at my church is a more intentional, committed and of same-gender discipleship group. All the things I share in this guidebook are based on my five-year experience in discipleship relationships. I realize it is also a skill that will grow along with experience and spiritual maturity.

I hope to equip other believers pursuing discipleship in their lives as an act of obedience to Christ, so the universal body of Christ can be built up. This guidebook is geared more toward the disciple-makers, but the disciples will also benefit in seeing where they are in their growth path and where they are heading for.

*Luke 24:13-15: That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus... as they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them.*

May you always have a companion(s) in your spiritual journey to talk and discuss things in life as Jesus teaches and leads you. I hope this guidebook will be useful in your endeavor to be a follower of Christ.

Journey on,

Sofia



## **A BACKSTORY**

Her face is weary, her mind seems deep in thoughts, her appearance is a bit unkempt.

She is trying to optimize her day, being efficient with her to-do lists. Her mind is swirling with a thousand little things for her household. But she knows she will start tomorrow with another thousand little things.

She has joy. Her joy is stemming from her deep love for her family and her God, but she does not look happy.

She walks through another day, surviving, juggling between the high calling of motherhood and a sense of loss within herself.

I was that lady... I was walking in her shoes.

I would not trade motherhood for the world. But like everything else in life, it is not enough. Surviving and making the best of family and work life, is this all there is to it in life? Am I doing what Christ wants me to do as His disciple?

Motherhood is a high calling once you give birth to a child. But we are also called to be a follower of Christ inside and outside the boundary of our home.

Being Christ's disciple is not only trying to be a good role model for our child and our neighbors, but it is about actively reaching out to people with the 'good news'. It is about deeply vested with the Kingdom agendas. It is about making Christ more real and relevant to your life first, and the people around.

This disciple mindset will make a difference in the way we approach relationships, the way we use our time, the way we face daily angst, the way we are becoming.

I am called to do what He wants me to do. It is not about giving back to the world. It is about answering a call...

I am very thankful I was given a role model at church who is willing to train me in the ways of the Lord. I am blessed by my sisters in Christ who are willing to invest in my life and change the way I think and do life.

When we follow and obey Him, as we are called, everything falls into place, there is *shalom*\* and no more striving.

Here am I, Lord. Send me.

\*Shalom is a Hebrew word meaning peace, harmony, wholeness, completeness, prosperity, welfare and tranquillity.

## WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

A disciple is one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines (principles, teachings, instructions) of another. In our context, we want the teachings and instructions of Jesus to be spread out and accepted by as many people as possible.

Matthew 28:18-20 is Jesus' last message on earth before He ascended to heaven:

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Jesus told us to:

- Make disciples of all nations.
- Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- Teach them to obey everything He commanded.

Jesus promises:

- All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him.
- Surely He is with us always until the very end of time.

So Jesus asks us to go, spread out and teach people to obey His teachings. That is Discipleship.

Jesus knows we won't be able to do it with our own strength, so He reassures us He already has all the authority in the universe to help us and He promises to be with us always. He enables us to do the things He tells us to do.

When Jesus discipled the twelve apostles, he practically lived, traveled and ministered together with them. Jesus was preparing them intensively in his last three years because there is a great mission waiting for them, which is to establish His church on earth.

There are many models of discipleship relationships. It can be from one to one, one to a few others, one to many. There is also a spectrum of intensity, from loosely acquainted to very intimate. The meetings could be sporadic or regularly. It could assemble by means of same vocations, workplace, church, ministry, callings, stages of life or even neighborhood. Certain models of discipleship could be suitable for a period of time or under particular circumstances.

The model of discipleship I am promoting in this guidebook is a regular meeting (once or twice a week) between women only (of the same gender). I think it is also beneficial to do discipleship with the people from the same local church because you believe in the same school of doctrines to minimize conflict of convictions.

**A note of caution:** if your church leadership does not regard these discipleship meetings as part of the framework of the church's vision, it will be hard for you to continue these activities without the support and facilities from the church leadership; it might cause some negative repercussions.

It is advantageous to have discipleship relationship with people who have the same calling or season of life because nobody will understand one's specific journey better than the people who are walking on the same path toward the same purpose.

I notice this in my husband's marketplace ministry, they all face similar issues and dilemmas on a daily basis which I could not fully appreciate and understand as a homemaker. These marketplace leaders can encourage, strengthen and remind each other the same biblical principles they need to adhere because they are fighting in the same arena.

**A note of caution:** I would avoid cross-gender discipleship, even in the marketplace setting for reasons I will explain later.

People might be reluctant to invest their time in a few disciples for some years compared to holding big bible classes or bible seminars for a shorter time where the attendants can reach in the hundreds.

I want to give a few reasons why one should consider to invest more time in the discipleship route:

- In terms of quality: imparting biblical wisdom and life modeling on a few will be much more effective than on the mass. The quality of disciples produced in a Discipleship group is likely better because the 'training' is more intensive, the setting is more personal and the process takes a longer time.
- In terms of quantity: instead of relying on one very gifted speaker, the discipleship route has a big potential in reaching out to more people. The multiplication effect is astounding when our disciples continue to reproduce other disciples who in turn reproduce other disciples and so on (2 Timothy 2:2).

If you can take \$500,000 (five hundred thousand dollars) now versus \$0.01 (one penny) doubled every day for thirty days, which one would you choose? If you choose the penny \$0.01, you would get over \$5,000,000 (five million dollars) in thirty days.

- In terms of Biblical example: Jesus and Paul invest their time more with their disciples than the mass. They taught publicly from time to time, but they spent most of their time with their disciples: teaching, role modeling, doing life and ministry together.

## **A DISCIPLESHIP MODEL**

The discipleship model I share in this guidebook is the one I have experienced in my church. For the most part, it is effective for the women's discipleship in my church.

The characteristics of this model are:

1. It is a group of three to five people with one leader or two co-leaders. The leader(s) is the disciple-maker.
2. It is a same-gender group.
3. It is a closed group which means people can't just drop by, join and leave the group anytime they want to. The members are invited when the group is about to be formed and they are committed until the group is disbanded (usually a period of one to five years).
4. Members of this group are committed to meet regularly (usually once a week) and adhere to the rules of the group for the period of discipleship.
5. It is understood from the beginning and part of the commitment of the group that when the disciples are ready, they will start a new group of their own and they, in turn, will be the leaders / disciple-makers.

The nature of this group is close-knit due to the regularity of the meetings and the closed-group policy.

I strongly advise same-gender discipleship group and not cross-gender discipleship group for obvious reasons. The dynamics of this discipleship model will naturally promote intimacy. If you are in a cross-gender discipleship group, you have to continuously guard yourself such that you will not cross over to a level of intimacy which might betray other relationships in your life. It is precarious to try and not worth the risks.

As time progresses and trusts are built, members can open up more and be vulnerable to share things from their life. The group should be a safe environment where confidentiality is upheld. If a member wants to share another member's life story for whatever purpose, they would need to ask permission first. This must be agreed upon together. If a line of trust is breached, it will be very hard to restore.

## **BENEFITS OF DISCIPLESHIP**

I used to be a lone ranger in my spiritual journey. I walked alone and charted my own course. I considered faith is a private matter between God and me. I loved to read Christian books and studied the Word on my own. I attended retreats, seminars, listened to sermons or podcasts from reputable Christian leaders. I joined big Bible Study groups in different settings. I also had close Christian friends with whom I shared my personal struggles from time to time. There is nothing wrong with all those activities, but...

I did not have a small and committed group of sisters who walk together with me in my spiritual journey all the way through the bumps and falls, helping me to break through obstacles and have deeply vested interests in my spiritual progress.

Before you feel the urge to recoil back to the ‘freedom’ of your private space, let me illustrate some inimitable benefits of a discipleship group.

Dr. James B. Richards in his book, *How to Stop the Pain*, said:

*For many people, vulnerability is a liability they would rather not encounter. So instead of facing the possibilities of unhappiness through pain in a relationship, they choose to live in the certainty of pain found in the absence of meaningful relationships. Relationships are the foundation of all growth. The only real gauge we have for personal growth is our effectiveness at developing meaningful relationships.<sup>1</sup>*

I was one of the proud ones. I felt I could walk on my own, seek the truth on my own, be comforted, be encouraged through my own private walk with Christ and take care of myself. It is understandable because of some past hurts and disappointments, it can be very difficult to trust others again. Sometimes it is less of a hassle, faster and easier to deal with things on your own.

But if you meet the right group of people, in this case, godly women who desire to please the Lord, your life journey would be much more delightful if

shared with like-minded sisters. The load will be lighter and bearable because it is shared, thus we can walk longer and farther.

*Contemporary movies and books depict solitary hero as something glorious and freeing, but it's an illusion, oftentimes it would lead to loneliness and downfall.*

*God designs us to need one another and to be there for one another. There's something supernatural in togetherness and we can go far and long without being worn out (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).*

God wants the body of Christ to be united and not scattered. So it is in accordance to His will if you pray for disciple-makers and disciples to walk alongside and build into each other's life.



## A MIRROR ILLUSTRATION

One of the unfortunate things about being human is we are very self-centered, we see too much from our own point of views and we are often blind to obvious things.

A huge benefit of walking with another is the mirroring benefit. We have the front-view seats of how the truths of Scripture are relevant and applied in the real lives of God's people, in this case, our sisters in the discipleship group. The illuminated truths become flesh and we can see it clearly.

When we witness other people's lives up close, we realize what we are lacking. If we see good things in others' lives, a vibrant prayer life, for example, it will inspire us to follow, emulate and learn.

And when we see a negative trait from our sister, ungratefulness, for example, we can be more aware how unpleasing it must be for the Lord. When we are the ones who are being ungrateful, we can be truly blind and feel fully justified. This will also be an opportunity to learn how to minister to our sister, by gently reminding her of her ungratefulness, pivoting her view from her circumstances back to Christ and encouraging her in her spiritual walk.

Thus when we walk together with other people, we can see God's working in our lives and others more clearly. The relationships function as mirrors.

Discipleship will reveal our idols and weaknesses. The good news is as we will see in the next illustration, discipleship is a favorable setting to smooth out our rough edges and deal with them biblically.

*Hebrew 10:24-25: And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

## A FOOD ILLUSTRATION

Since I am a foodie and struggle with dieting almost throughout my life, I came out with this food illustration. The food metaphor we are referring here is spiritual food...☺

In my younger years as a Christian, I was like a person in a cafeteria. I could pick and choose my food to my heart's content, whatever I was in the mood for. I decided my own portions based on my personal judgments and goals.

*But it is hard for me to achieve my sanctification and spiritual goals and I keep failing. It is not because I don't know what is good for me. I mostly know, but I couldn't muster enough willpower to desire the good, healthy things. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41).*

*While it is the work of the Holy Spirit to change my appetites from the inside out, I would benefit from sisters who walk alongside me so we can remind one another to choose and to do what is right.*

The sisters in the discipleship group function like a nutritionist and a personal trainer combined, who manage your diet, monitor your progress, remind you of the true rewards waiting, check on you if you've done your exercise or if you've been eating right. These sisters in faith are committed to your success and come alongside you.

*2 Peter 1:12: So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.*

## HOW TO START?

It starts with yourself. Before you plan to disciple other women, some questions you need to ask yourself are:

- Do I have an authentic faith?
- Do I have a secure identity rooted in Biblical truths?
- Am I already mature in Christ or am I on a growth track toward maturity?

It is important that a disciple-maker has a saving faith and a genuine relationship with Christ. She should be rooted in an authentic community of believers and has shown a track record of obedience to the Scripture. She has a healthy habit of personal quiet time and a prayer life, communing with the Lord on a daily basis.

*If we don't have genuine growing faith, then we will only be trumpeting empty Christian platitudes. Our disciples will know if we ourselves haven't lived out those truths. But if we are truly growing, the momentum of our growth can help carry others along in the beginning.*

*Self-discipline, a good time management, the depth of our walk with Christ and our understanding of His Word will affect our readiness and effectiveness as a disciple-maker.*

It doesn't mean we have to be fully matured in order to start discipling others. Fellow pilgrims in this spiritual journey know we do not always move forward, sometimes we can move backward and sometimes we can be stuck in deep valleys for a while.

But if we are in the Lord, the Lord will not let us go astray or stand still for a long time, He will nudge us, empower us to get up and move forward. He will continue working in us thus we will always be on the growth track. Even

though it might not be a linear progression and we sometimes go back and forth, but in the grand scheme of things there is an enduring forward and upward trajectory of spiritual growth for His children.

We need not wait until we are 'perfect' to disciple others. There is always someone who is a little behind us that can benefit from our knowledge of and experiences with the Lord.

*Our spiritual authority to disciple others does not come from our ministerial position but from the authenticity of our faith in the private moments.*

*Christ is the living water and the Word of God is the spiritual food, they are the source of life-giving counsels to give to others.*

In fact, discipling others will grow and move you forward much faster. There are only a few phases in life that can be compared to motherhood in its ability to cultivate maturity and growth in a short time. Suddenly there's another human depended on you, you can't take your own sweet time anymore. You need to shape up in a minimal time to function and give your best.

So it is with discipleship, you know there is another person who wants to be taught and shown the way by you, this will serve as a positive pressure to shape up your own spiritual life, to learn more diligently and to share your life sincerely to your disciples. God designs us to grow by giving.

Discipleship is like spiritual parenting, just like how the Apostle Paul felt toward his spiritual offspring (1 Timothy 1:2, 18).

*Galatians 4:19: My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you...*

*1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12: Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.*

Unlike parenthood where there can only be one set of parents, as a disciple-maker we should be humble and aware that we are just one link in this person's process toward maturity. There could be other disciple-makers in this person's other seasons of life or in different areas of her life.

*1 Corinthians 3:5-9: What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe --- as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.*

When we disciple others, we are co-laboring with God for that person. It is a wonderful privilege. We need to pray at all times and it is indispensable to follow His Spirit's leading because we can only water and plant, but God is the one who can make the person grows and transforms.

We need to understand we are merely sowing the seeds of God's truths and teachings, but internalizing those truths and yearning an intimate relationship with God are within the Holy Spirit's department. We need to pray the Holy Spirit is working in our disciple's heart and making her heart a fertile soil permeated by an obedient and repentant spirit.

## **WHOM TO DISCIPLE?**

Another difference between parenthood and discipleship is as parents, you cannot choose whom your child will be. While in discipleship, there is usually an agreement or a covenant between two parties: the disciple-maker and the disciples before entering the discipleship relationship.

The priority is to disciple whomever God is leading you to disciple. These are general rules to help you spot good potential disciples:

### **1. Faithful and Available**

Because of the closed-group nature, the regular meeting times and some workload in studying the Scripture and doing the homework, we want disciples who are available and faithful with their time and commitments.

The regularity of the meetings (not sporadic) is needed to build a momentum of change and transformation. In order for the discipleship group to work, we need to depend on each other's commitments.

### **2. Teachable**

This does not mean our disciples cannot question or disagree with us. It means this person's heart is in a humble posture of wanting to be taught. She is looking for someone to help her grow and she also has a heart for other people.

### **3. Hunger for God**

You can sense when the Holy Spirit has already put a fire in a person's heart, that person cannot ignore it. She is seeking God and searching His truth deeper. She desires to know God more intimately. These are the people who recognize their own spiritual poverty, these are the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3).

### **4. Willing to multiply**

Before we even start the discipleship relationship, the disciple needs to know what is expected of her, which is to pass on. Once she is already on a growth track, she needs to disciple other people 'younger' than her in spiritual maturity.

We need to be prayerful in our actions and decisions because we are entering a long-term relationship commitment. We can start with reaching out to a person, getting to know her better and developing an authentic friendship.

The best way to avoid mistakes is to follow the Lord's leading, Jesus prayed a lot before He chose his disciples in Luke 6:12-13. We need to pray and give some time for confirmations from the Lord before we make any decision. The Holy Spirit usually impresses upon our heart the person He wants us to pursue for discipleship.

While we wait, we can get to know the person better to see if she has the qualities of a good disciple listed above and if we can connect well to the person. While we wait, we also ask God to prepare our heart so we can have the burden and love for the person.

**A note of caution:** if you encounter a non-believer, it is best to evangelize the person first until she has a saving faith in Christ. If there is no Holy Spirit inside the person then whatever seeds you are planting will be futile or difficult to germinate because there is no Spiritual power to make them grow and bear fruits. *Fruit* in this passage refers to godly and eternal-impacting thoughts and actions.

*John 15:5: (Jesus said) I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

God is the one who writes His laws in the believer's heart. When we share verses from the Scripture to our disciples, we only verbalize the words and model how they are applied in modern life settings.

*Hebrews 8:10: I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*

The Holy Spirit in the believer's own heart will resonate and recognize godly truths. The Holy Spirit also continues to nudge and empower believers toward obedience to the revealed truths.

*John 14:26: But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*

Salvation is the prerequisite before going into the teachings of Christian living. Without the Holy Spirit working inside the hearts, our meetings will be filled with intellectual discourse without much spiritual dynamics. The first step is to make sure your disciple has a saving faith.

*Acts 2:38: Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

*Titus 3:5-6: He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

*2 Corinthians 5:18: And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him.*



## WHAT DO WE HAVE?

We can feel inadequate to teach others because we are not experienced teachers. It is true some people are especially gifted to teach many people, but God has equipped all believers with two things to teach and counsel others:

### 1. **Word of God**

I believe the Bible is inerrant and infallible, thus I would use God's Word to validate His own Word.

*2 Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Do I need to say more? We have access to His powerful and wonderful Word, to know what He has said, His thoughts, His character, His plans and promises for us.

To think that for more than one thousand years until the 1500s, only very limited people had access to His Word or even only to bits and pieces of the whole Bible. Because of illiteracy, logistics and poverty, most people were not able to access a complete whole Bible.

The Bible is His long love letter to us, God reveals Himself in His Word so we get to know Him and build a relationship with Him which He longs for. The Word of God is such a precious gift.

God's Word is alive and active, it will meet us right where we are, at our level of maturity, our intellectual capacity, our life struggles, our temperament, whether we are still new believers or old-timers. The same passage would reveal distinct things at different seasons and circumstances of life and compel us to make appropriate life changes. His Word affirms and reproves our heart.

*Hebrews 4:12: For the Word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

As we read and study His Word together, either directly from the Bible or from Bible study books, His Word will teach us new things that would challenge us and require our response. When we respond obediently, then the process of sanctification is advancing and gaining momentum. Sanctification is being made holy.

Jesus prayed this prayer for his disciples (John 17:17):  
*Sanctify them by the truth; your Word is truth.*

## **2. Spirit of God**

The Word of God teaches and renews our minds, but the Holy Spirit reveals and transforms deep hidden things in our hearts which only God knows.

*1 Corinthians 2:10-12: these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

The Holy Spirit is actively interpreting the Word and translating His truth to our current state of heart so that new insight and understanding will come to light.

Unbelievers do not have the spiritual capacity to understand the things of God because they don't have the Holy Spirit inside of them yet. The Holy Spirit within us is always working on different levels and areas of growth to make us more holy and mature, this is sanctification.

God can see the heart objectively, we are blind to what is going on in our hearts because of our sins and selfishness. By being in tune with the Holy Spirit, He can reveal deep things we would not realize on our own.

*When we are in commune with the Holy Spirit, lies can be realized, hearts are softened and changed, hidden sins can be revealed and forgiven.*

God's intervention will come through the Holy Spirit, supernatural healing and restoration will follow. Transforming and renewing lives are the Holy Spirit's supernatural work, we follow the Holy Spirit's leading in our thoughts and actions.

*Romans 8:5-6: Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.*

## **The Spiritual 'Skills'**

How do we harness the power from the Word of God and the Spirit of God to teach others? It is back to the starting line, do we ourselves have an authentic faith in Christ? And are we walking faithfully in our growth track? If we are, then we need not worry...we will make mistakes but God will faithfully continue working in us and perfecting us.

*Philippians 1:6: being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Our ability to understand His Word and our responsiveness to co-labor with the Holy Spirit are the 'skills' which can be worked on and improved by discipline, diligence and obedience. There is no avoiding it, growth requires work.

*1 Timothy 4:15-16: Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

## WHAT IS THE BEST FORMAT?

There is no pre-set particular order, but these elements should exist in the regular discipleship meetings:

### 1. Inductive Study of the Word:

Learn God's Word together, interpret the meanings and figure out the applications to each person's circumstances of life.

The main purpose of discipleship is to accept and spread the teachings and instructions of Jesus. This part should be the bulk of the meetings.

We can use Bible study guidebooks which are readily available; we can choose either by topics, by books of the Bible or by studying the characters in the Bible. The books I have used a few times are *Discipleship Essentials* and *The Essential Commandment* by Greg Ogden. Ogden's books cover the basic doctrines and principles of a Christian life.

As our ability to digest His Word improves, we can learn directly from the Bible, there are Bible commentaries, dictionaries and notes for research available on the internet, but we need to choose carefully from reputable sources.

As we get to know and understand our disciples better, we can sense what God is currently doing in her life and we develop a vision for the direction of her growth. The disciple-maker must have the courage to challenge her disciples toward growth and life-changes.

We structure the time to dig parts of the Scripture where the contents are most needed and applicable to her life. Our primary aim is for our disciples to grow and be more attached to Jesus Christ, not just to increase their Bible knowledge.

We also don't want our disciples to be dependent on us. In the end, they need to be adept at how to dig and digest the Word for themselves.

*Colossians 3:16: Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...*

*Romans 15:14: I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.*

## **2. Sharing Life**

The personal real-life stories will support the truths learned from the Word. Our lives are vivid illustrations on how God's plans and precepts would look like in modern life so people understand clearly. They can see how these truths play out and carry out in real lives. It is through each other's lives we process God's truths.

If we disciple people who are on a similar journey with us, for example, motherhood, most likely they experience the same problems we face. Thus our experiences will be relevant and beneficial to them because of the similar life issues.

Doing life together is an integral part of Discipleship. This is the part where principal truths can be applied to each person's unique circumstances. It is such a bonding experience to celebrate victories and lament defeats together as we overcome life issues.

## **3. Accountability**

The disciple-maker is like a 'personal trainer' who helps monitor her disciples' spiritual diet and disciplines so they can achieve healthy spiritual fitness and maturity. Exhortation or rebuking is never easy. Our relationship's bonds with our disciples must be strong enough to bear the weight of truth.

People usually can sense our love and true intentions. They can accept our rebuke if they trust our motivations. Our main motivation is for them to grow toward Christlikeness, not to feed our own pride and sense of superiority. The forms of accountability are by giving counsel, caution, urgency, advice, warning, reprimand and discipline.

*Proverbs 13:10: Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.*

Our goal is always what is best for our disciples, we can't be a people pleaser to be an approved worker of God. The act of rebuking will cause anxiety on both the person who gives and receives the rebuke because we can't possibly know what will come out of it. But we are ultimately reporting to God, we must do the things which please Him by obeying Him even though it is difficult to do.

Sometimes people can stay in an accountability group for years and other people don't have a clue of the darkness that is holding them down. We can see from the scandal headlines of church leaders that surprise even close colleagues.

The amount of openness depends entirely on the person. How she feels convicted by the Spirit to be transparent and how she senses the trustworthiness of her discipleship group will determine how much access she is willing to open for others to come and see the condition of her heart. When she opens the door to her heart, she is vulnerable but at the same time, she is letting the light come in.

*Ephesians 5:11-13: Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible --- and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.*

The amount of openness she is willing to put on the table is proportional to how much help she can receive. The more access she gives to others, the more freely God can help her because God works through His people.

*James 5:16a: Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.*

**A note of caution:** Gossiping and slandering other people's sin is also a sin. Sharing of information without permission even for a prayer request is also not acceptable.

We are not the spiritual police. The desire to be accountable has to come voluntarily from one's own self which is again the work of the Holy Spirit. The discipleship group provides a structure of support where encouragement and rebukes can be rendered back and forth freely because the person herself wants and gives permission to be held accountable.

Ultimately, the motivation is always love and for the person's best interest. We keep each other accountable toward progress by overcoming life's obstacles together with the Holy Spirit's help.

*Proverbs 19:20: Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise.*

Accountability needs maturity to handle, sometimes the sin can be 'too big' for us to handle. With loving wisdom, we can always seek help from other people who are more experienced or our church leaders.

#### **4. Prayer**



Spend a considerate amount of time in praying together because when we pray together, we are joined together in the Spiritual realm. Our minds and hearts will be more united and conforming to one another during prayer times.

We will know things about each other and God during prayer times which we wouldn't be able to know during study and discussion times. God changes our hearts and talks to us during prayer times. It is a special time during discipleship meetings.

One benefit of meeting in people's homes instead of public places is we can pray more freely and unreservedly.

We continue to support and pray for one another throughout the week until the next discipleship meeting.

*James 5:16b: The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

## WHAT ARE THE SKILLS NEEDED?

These are the skills we can work on to teach and disciple others:

### 1. Study the Word

Inductive study: observe the Word, interpret the meanings intended by the author and appropriate the applications to the context of a person's life.

Before we study a passage from the Bible, we need help from the Holy Spirit to impress and reveal God's truth from that particular passage. We pray first and ask for guidance.

#### The method of Inductive Study is:

- **Observation:** asking questions about the passage we read. To understand the context of the passage, we ask the who, whom, what, when, where and how questions.

The Holy Spirit impresses certain parts of the passage in our heart, illuminates new angles of truth and increases the quality of our understanding.

As your spiritual knowledge, intuition and skill improve, you will come up with more creative investigative questions. These investigative questions will help you unpack the precious truths from the Word.

- **Interpretation:** getting the answers to your questions.
  - Find cross-references: Cross-references are verses that have similar phrases or words. Let other parts of the Scripture help explain your passage; Scripture explains Scripture. Study Bibles and Commentaries usually provide cross-reference information.

You can use a Bible concordance to do further study on a word. Concordance is typically at the back of your Bible. It contains an alphabetical index of words and helps you find where they appear in the Bible. The classic concordance is *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*.

- Read commentaries: Commentaries are the critical explanations of Bible passages by theologians. The reputable ones are Matthew Henry and MacArthur commentaries.

Bible dictionaries are another reference tool and usually provide concise definition of a word, historical and theological context and can also give original Hebrew (OT) or Greek (NT) words.

- Consult other godly people.
- **Application:** how we apply this truth from the passage to our life. The Holy Spirit impresses God's plans and desires in our heart and the He also empowers us to take the steps of obedience.

This is an online reference about [Inductive Study of the Bible](#).

A good online resource for Bible study is:

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/>

*Our knowledge and understanding of God, ourselves and the workings of the world will increase by studying His Word inductively.*

*Hebrews 5:14: But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.*

*Jeremiah 15:16: When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty.*

Indeed, the Word of God is the spiritual 'food' we need to consume, digest and grow healthy spiritually.

## **2. Devotion**

Studying God's Word will increase our knowledge and understanding, and renew our mindsets in looking at life and doing life.

But devotion will change our hearts, devotion is operating more at the emotional level.

A side note about the two sisters in Bethany, Mary and Martha. In the account of raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:17-37), Jesus interacted differently between Martha and Mary. He communicated more in the rational level with Martha while He connected emotionally with Mary. Later Mary revealed her utmost devotion by anointing Jesus with an expensive perfume (John 12:1-11). Jesus loves them both, but we can experience God more wholly and intimately if we relate to Jesus like both Martha and Mary.<sup>2</sup>

Devotion requires solitude, mulling over issues of the heart, listening to the Holy Spirit and responding in loving obedience to Him.

If we are devoted to Him, our heart will be more like Christ's heart and we can be more effective in reaching out to others. We become powerful living images of Christ for the people around us.

*2 Corinthians 5:9:*

*So we make it our goal to please Him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.*

### **3. Prayer**

The older I am, the more I realize that prayer is the most important thing. Humans' power is very limited and can only do so much.

Having a good quality prayer life means your heart is regularly communing with God in spirits, in two-way communication. God releases His supernatural power in answering our prayers.

But more importantly, you are growing more like Christ because during prayers your heart is tuning with His heart.

*Jude 1:20: But you, dear friends, must build each other up in your most holy faith, pray in the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*Romans 8:26: In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.*

A good resource book on prayer is: *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* by Timothy Keller, 2016.

### **4. Counseling and Additional Study**

We constantly need one another to speak truths into our lives because it is difficult to perceive one's own blind spots. The ability to counsel one another in truth and love is paramount.

*Ephesians 4:15: Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.*

The heart is very creative in constantly justifying our sinfulness. Our heart reflexively determines to secure our rights, comfort and

happiness above all else. We can be easily deceived by our own hearts.

We need the ability to convey appropriate biblical counsels to our disciples in the context of their lives. It will require counseling techniques and methodologies which we can learn.

But ultimately, our depth and breadth of understanding of God's Word (His precepts and promises) will provide guiding principles for the issues at hand. We lead and guide our disciple into God's heart and plans for her. In the end, she will need to decide whom she would yield to, her own heart or God.

If you're helping a group of people with specific life circumstances, for example, refugees, single parents, addicts, etc., reading related books or learning from experienced people and experts who have established their authority in the specific fields will equip you further.

A good resource book on biblical counseling is: *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: People in Need of Change Helping People in Need of Change* by Paul David Tripp, 2002.

## WHAT ARE THE EMOTIONAL TOOLS?

This is not based on any scientific research, but merely my impression. It is apparent that the women's discipleship groups typically have more layers of emotional dynamics compared to the men's groups.

In men's group, things can be discussed as a matter-of-factly. The women's group, on the other hand, is not as simple. It is probably due to women's nature of higher emotional acuteness and sensitivity compared to men. Men's groups have their own issues, but women's groups have to deal more with the emotional issues.

### The Emotional Predicaments

*It is my unscientific observation that women generally experience more internal pressure to conform, to please and to compare.*

The ensuing common issues are:

#### 1. Judging<sup>1</sup>

It is wise to make judgments based on people's actions and track records (factual realm), but because of our emotional make-up, we instinctively try to delve deeper into people's motivations behind their actions (interpretation and perception realm) and make judgments based on our presumptions.

We naturally filter everything through our experiences, dispositions and state of emotions. Because of our sinful and self-centeredness nature, we (not God) become the center of interpretation and perception. We view and judge the world through our personal paradigms.

We might think we walk in wisdom and discernment, but the likelihood of being in the wrong is huge. There are so many unknown factors involved, our analytical prowess and emotional empathy are

also limited. Simply said, we don't have the ability to judge one's heart completely.

Even though we only have genuinely good intentions to help, judging one's motivation will mostly create pain in both the person who gives judgment and the person who receives the judgment. Being presumptuous is detrimental to the health of the relationship. Clarifying facts is a bold and wise step before making judgments.

*1 Corinthians 2:11: For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*

## **2. Jealousy**

I witness the Cain and Abel's quandary to this day in my daughters' daily squabbles. It is an innate desire to compare, especially among people in similar life stages. Comparing can be a positive thing if it can inspire us to be a better person, but God hates jealousy and envy.

So far I haven't found the antidote to our natural urge to compare. What I find helpful in lessening the inclination to compare are:

- Having contentment and grateful outlooks in life
- Using my talents or gifts for others
- Fixing my eyes on God and trusting His sovereignty, His plans and promises over my life

And love, love always helps. Love distills any kernel of envy. As our capacity to love grows, our propensity to compare diminishes.

*James 3:16: For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and every evil practice.*



### 3. Peer Pressure (Fear of Men)

Peer pressure is mostly stemmed from our desire to be loved, approved and accepted. It is women's nature to be agreeable and peer pressure can sometimes be a positive thing.

Although we want all the good behavior changes come genuinely from the heart, mixing exhortation with a bit of positive pressure at the beginning helps to propel a person's life change. Positive peer pressure provides a boost of energy to break inertia in a person's life, prompting life changes in the positive direction.

Hopefully, once the person experiences God in the process and tastes the benefits herself, she will be internally convinced and motivated to make changes out of her own free will.

**A note of caution:** as a disciple-maker, we can be overly zealous in trying to help and change our disciple's life that we inadvertently pressure them to do things they are not capable yet due to lack of conviction, inability to prioritize, time management issue, psychological limitation or other reasons; this might create emotional burdens for our disciples.

We have to be aware that untimely and unhealthy pressure discourages and disheartens people because true intimacy is built around the emotional freedom to disagree and to differ. We can rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance to know when to persist and when to give space.

What we look for is genuine heart changes, not behavioral changes out of compliance and guilt. Behavioral changes will not last long. But if the changes come from one's own internal convictions, then the Holy Spirit has truly changed the heart.

*Galatians 1:10: Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

These emotional predicaments can also occur within the disciple-maker herself. We cannot exhort or rebuke others if we ourselves still have those emotions. We need to repent first and ask for forgiveness from God and only then will we have the spiritual authority and permission to peacefully exhort others.

These are the typical things which drain us and make us tired emotionally. Some women give up and avoid meeting with other women altogether or at least they try to keep some 'safe' distance. This is exactly what Satan wants because when we are alone, we are more susceptible to his attacks.

By God's grace, we can surely overcome these emotional pitfalls and we grow so much out of those. We develop through the ups and downs of relationships and consequently, we will be a much more effective minister in God's work.

The benefits of meeting together will far outweigh walking alone because we are created to commune with one another and belong in a community. A godly community is an extension of God's grace, love, acceptance and confirmation.

## The Emotional Tools

Instead of avoiding, let's wade in the emotional expanse armed with these tools:

### 1. Empathy

There are two levels of empathy:

- The first level is to imagine being that other person, with all her history, her temperament, her maturity, her distinct emotional and intellectual make-up.
- The second level is to imagine how you would feel if you stand in her shoes and experience what she is experiencing now.

Most people would skip the first level of empathy and go straight to the second level. They imagine themselves walking in that other person's shoe. They imagine how they would feel and what they would do if they experience the same thing.

Needless to say, if we skip the first level, our mental picture of what the other person is going through will be incorrect or inaccurate at best. We wouldn't be able to empathize entirely with the corresponding intensity because in our mind we are using our own personalities and paradigms to imagine what the other person is going through. This will make us less effective in helping and relating to others.

Empathetic intelligence is not easy and some people have it more naturally than others. We need to practice our empathy skills: to imagine ourselves to be that other person with all her past and personality make-up (first step), and then to imagine how it must have felt for her experiencing all these now (second step). So when we give counsels, people can sense we truly appreciate their situation and understand what they are going through.

### 2. Love

Love conquers all. It is a trite statement, but it is true. Love will outweigh your lack of Biblical knowledge for sure, it will also overlook

your spiritual shortcomings. Love covers all mistakes. When you love people, they put their guard down and you can connect to their hearts more effectively. When you love people, they do not feel they are mere 'projects' to you that need to be fixed.

Love accepts people as they are with all their heresy. Love has faith in one's glorious destiny despite evident deficiencies. Love gives us the energy to truly listen and have real dialogues. Love compels us to do the extra mile.

To have a capacity for sincere and genuine love is not natural, it is supernatural because we are naturally selfish and self-centered people. We can start by praying to God to use us as a channel for His love and grace. It might surprise you one day when you realize how you have changed and become such a loving person. God answers our godly requests.

Please read Romans 12:9-21 to see how the Apostle Paul describes 'Love in Action'.

*2 Peter 1:5-8: For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

## WHAT IS THE END GOAL?

What do we want to achieve at the end? We could learn a lot from Paul's expectations of Timothy:

### 1. Able to handle the Word of God correctly and diligently in personal spiritual disciplines.

*2 Timothy 2:15-16: Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. Avoid godless chatter (complaining, gossiping), because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.*

The Word of God is our arsenal as God's worker. We need to handle the Word of God carefully and correctly. We do not want to be false teachers neither intentionally nor unintentionally.

We must be honest in seeking the truth with integrity and we humbly learn from other solid teachers or mentors who walk longer and further than us. We need to build up our abilities in digging and mining the truth from the Bible and in seeking the Spirit for faithful interpretations and wise applications.

*These all will take diligence and disciplines. Our private time with the Lord in the Word and in prayers will continue to shape us into becoming effective workers of God. God reveals Himself during those private quiet moments.*

These revelations of God from the Word strengthen, empower and give us the unceasing wealth of resources to share His truth and teaching to others.

## **2. Continuous growth in our godliness and love toward God and others.**

*1 Timothy 4:12: ...but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.*

We are always in our own growth journey as we lead others in theirs. Let our heart be assured and comforted that being righteous in front of God doesn't mean we are mostly perfect. In fact, the names which were written in the Bible Hall of Fame, the Heroes of the Faith (Hebrews 11) had committed some blatant and appalling sins. What matter to God is they repented, and they wanted to be made right with God again, and so should we.

*Proverbs 11:20: The Lord delights in those whose ways are blameless.*

*Being righteous and blameless means we will always go back to God in repentance every time we sin with the intention to stop our sinful thoughts and actions.*

There will be ups and downs in our growing pains for sure, but we cannot linger away from Him for too long because our hearts already belong to Him. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:38-39).

So please be comforted, if we are in Him, we will always continuously grow in the Holy Spirit's empowering presence. Slowly but surely our minds, desires and attitudes will change and transform toward godliness emulating Christ.

*Philippians 2:13: For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.*

*Jude 1:24: To Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.*

*Romans 8:29: For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son... (until we become like Christ)*

### **3. Teach others who will be able to teach others...**

*2 Timothy 2:2: And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.*

It is essential our disciples eventually can seek God's truth from the Scripture and apply it in their lives without being dependent on us or other people.

The investigative and inductive skills are very crucial to excavate the precious truths from the Bible. Then they too will be able to confidently disciple others rooted soundly in God's Words.

Our goal is for our disciples to dig the Scripture on their own, digest the Word of God scrupulously, apply the truths faithfully and teach others to do the same. God expects multiplication.

Our disciples' capacity to learn, teach, pray, care and love will continue to grow as they faithfully do this, their impacts will multiply.

## Three Areas of Development

*To summarize, there are three areas of growth we expect from our disciples: knowledge of God's word, godly character and ministry skills.*

For ministry skills, I see that there are two categories:

- The General Ministry Skills such as prayer, study Scripture, counseling, teach others (in small settings).
- The Special Ministry Skills such as administrative, music worship, public teaching, hospitality.

The General Ministry Skills are the skills that all believers need to develop. The Special Ministry Skills are the skills that are divinely anointed and extraordinarily strong in some people.

There are lists of spiritual gifts from various passages in the Bible (Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 27-31, Ephesians 4:11-12). These lists are not exhaustive because the aspects of God are limitless. Each gift is a certain aspect of God fashioned in us. It is by His generous grace and His creative sovereignty that each of us is blessed by different ministry gifts and strengths, which we are to use to bless others.

Our personality make-up combined with our ministry gifts enable us to build up His body (church) with our unique contribution. These gifts are privileges from God so we can take part in His Kingdom work. We need to continually develop our ministry gifts and skills by rising to the needs in our local church and finding opportunities to exercise them.

*1 Peter 4:10: Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.*



## **WHEN TO END THE DISCIPLESHIP?**

The time comes to end the discipleship relationship if the disciple is in any of these three states:

### **1. The disciple is ready to be a disciple-maker themselves.**

It is time to cut the apron string. It does not mean we cut off the relationship, instead, the relationship would morph into friendship and you may not spend time together as intensive as before.

It is better if there are opportunities where both can serve and minister together. That way they can continue spending time and growing together but now in the capacity of co-ministers.

### **2. The disciple is not ready to grow or does not want to grow.**

Discipleship is a purposeful relationship and the purpose is to make disciples. A disciple-maker should not allow the relationship to drift without purpose. This is a bit tricky, especially if the disciple still wants to maintain the relationship with the same level of intensity but she limits the purpose of the meetings only for the pleasure of friendship and fellowship.

The disciple does not allow biblical counsels spoken into her life. Her words or her actions expose her adamant refusal of godly changes. All of these reveal she is not ready to follow Christ and His teachings.

We need to end the discipleship relationship if the person does not bear the fruit of the Spirit after some time. She neither grows her attachment and love to Jesus nor changes her character to be more like Christ.

A true disciple of Christ would always feel an abiding holy discontent. This holy discontent remains in us because we are acutely aware of areas in our life which still grieve the Holy Spirit and we desire to

change them. Holy discontent also persists because we are burdened by the Kingdom work God plans for us and we are continuously equipping ourselves to be an effective worker.

For this reason, if a person already feels content and satisfied with the way things are and does not feel the need to change much, then she is not ready to be a disciple.

*Luke 10:2: He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

There is still much Kingdom work waiting for workers, we need to steward and allocate our time and energy well. We need to continue making disciples and find people who are ready to be discipled.

*Matthew 7:6: Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.*

Jesus was warning his disciples to preach only before receptive audience and not to waste their time by offering something helpful or valuable to a person who does not appreciate or understand it.

It will be hard for both the disciple-maker and the disciple to end the discipleship relationship because the relationship would come across as a conditional friendship to the disciple, which is repelling to most people. God's love is unconditional and so should be our love to others.

The disciple-maker should continue to befriend and love her former disciple but she simply could not disciple her anymore. The implication maybe they could not spend as much time together as before.

It will need maturity, especially from the disciple-maker to tread the new dynamics of the relationship so that the former disciple will not feel rejected. And through the element of time (hopefully) the disciple-maker can continue to exude the unconditional love of Christ that can be felt by her former disciple.

### **3. Life happens.**

Some life situations happen that are not permitting the continuance of the discipleship group, for example, relocation, a sick family member, etc.

## SUMMARY AND CLOSING

In a nutshell, discipleship for the disciple-maker entails:

- imparting the skills to study the Word of God and learn God's truth so our disciples can be independently dependent on God and His Word.
- modeling a life of obedience, growth and spiritual disciplines (with the ups and downs) so a disciple can always stay on a sustainable growth track.
- teaching and challenging them to respond in godly ways to whatever life brings and make appropriate life changes.
- overcoming together life issues that are impeding their growth.
- loving and praying faithfully for her disciples.
- equipping them to be able to do the same with their own 'progeny in faith'.
- having the wisdom to know when to end the discipleship relationship.

We are to encourage, affirm, challenge and lead our disciples on their spiritual journey. I hope this guidebook will be useful for equipping you further to be disciple-makers for Christ.

As you obey the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) and experience discipleship, you and your love for others will grow like no other way. There will be hardships and setbacks along the way, but in hindsight, you can always be sure those are the spots where you grow the most in your journey.

Discipling others is obedience to God's command. It is a spiritual journey toward maturity in Christ for both you and your disciple. Discipling is also a skill set that will improve over time as your maturity and experience grow.

I have made many mistakes, I have learned many lessons. In turn, my abilities and confidence to disciple others have improved over time.

You will experience such great joy as you become a conduit of God's grace, love and power in another person's journey toward Christ. It is exhilarating to be an active part of God's victory over evil patterns in a

person's life. It is a wonderful privilege when you make an impact of eternal value and witness godly transformations in this person's life.

**A note of caution:** the sense of satisfaction and significance of the impact you make can be addicting. Yet once you derive your sense of worth, identity and life purpose from something other than God, that something has become your idol. So I pray that discipleship (as other good things in life) will not become your idol.

*May Christ always be the front and center of everything we do. He is the enabler, we are the conduit. He is the message, we are merely the messenger.*

*I pray that discipleship will become your lifestyle as a follower of Christ even as you progress perpetually toward becoming like Christ until our Heavenly Father calls us home.*

*Ephesians 4:11-13: So Christ himself gave... the teachers to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

*1 Peter 4:11: If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*

## BACKSTORY CONTINUED...

As I get older, I realize the most precious commodity entrusted to us is time. Yet I cringe when I think about how much time I have wasted in my private little indulgences whenever I browse trivial 'news', watch Netflix shows or engage in unproductive chats. I struggle with digital distractions.

My flesh was seeking relief in these little forms of unwholesome entertainment while my soul was seeking purpose and meaning in my daily activities. This incompatibility resulted a hollow existence and I suffered a mild depression for about two years.

When we meet in Discipleship group, we talk about God's precepts and promises, we saturate our mind with His truth. It is amazing, I can almost feel the cleansing in my mind after our meetings. I have not totally defeated my demons within, but what I can say is there are progressive victories and I am fighting a winning battle. My desire, my appetite and my sources of security are slowly changed over the years. I am gaining more self-control over sinful gratifications.

My ultimate joy now comes from seeing my life and my sisters' lives being transformed by God's power and through each other's support. These are meaningful because when our lives bear godly fruits, the impacts transcend our time on earth. My desire is for purposeful godly women to rise, make disciples in every city and replicate themselves faithfully. I pray that it will be a massive movement for His Kingdom as He intended when He gave the command in Matthew 28. My hope is this little book can help to equip women in obeying the 'call to disciple'.

Entering mid-life, I have come to a (in-your-face) realization that our time on Earth is very short. The only things worth pursuing are things that matter to God and the best thing I can do with my life is to have it centered within His will. Each person seeks some kinds of validation in their life, it is natural to long for that. Yet the only proper and trustworthy validation is from my Creator, not from the world accolades and not even from my own self. This is what I long to hear when I meet Him face to face:

Well done, Sofia!

## NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

<sup>1</sup>Richards, James B. *How to Stop the Pain*. New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House. 2001.

<sup>2</sup>Yeakley, Dana. *The Gentle Art of Discipling Women: Nurturing Authentic Faith in Ourselves and Others*. Colorado Springs: NavPress in alliance with Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 2015.

Yeakley's thoughts has influenced my understanding further about women discipleship.

Thank you to my sisters in Christ at church for reviewing and giving inputs to this guidebook. I really appreciate all your kind efforts.