

DISCIPLESHIP AND RELATIONSHIP

Teacher's Manual

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OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, the participants should:

- recognize the importance and value of relationship in discipleship
- appreciate and apply the four building blocks of relationship: trust, love, forgiveness, and communication
- be inspired to continue building relationships as they fulfill the Great Commission

OVERVIEW

Session 1: The Essence of Discipleship

Session 2: Trust and Love

Session 3: Forgiveness and Communication

SESSION 1 – THE ESSENCE OF DISCIPLESHIP

INTRODUCTION

Discipleship is more organic than we realize. Discipleship and relationship is an important aspect for us to become the disciples that God called us to be.

Discipleship and Relationship is an important aspect in understanding the fullness of God's intent for discipleship. Discipleship is often thought of as a fixed set of models, methods, and practices. This thinking entails several limitations:

1. Time⁽¹⁾ Based

There is a time limitedness on discipleship models, practices, and processes. What works in a certain space and time may not necessarily work for the here and now.

EXPLANATION

What worked then may not be applicable in this day and age as time changes the way methods operate. The practices, for example, done in the churches of Ephesus and Thyatira (in Asia Minor) during the first century are now non-existent in the land of Turkey.

2. Geo-cultural⁽²⁾ Realities

What works in one place may not necessarily work in another place because of the geo-cultural difference.

EXPLANATION

A concept in one place and culture may not be relevant in another. For example, *ONE 2 ONE* is an effective tool in personal discipleship with Filipinos and former Catholics. However, it may not work as effectively in nations like Japan where the notion of sin and God is minimal. Most Japanese think that they are gods. So if you use tools such as *ONE 2 ONE* and talk about sin and God with them, they may have no concept to latch their faith on.

3. Socio-economic⁽³⁾ Realities

There are various socio-economic realities that have to be considered.

EXPLANATION

We, as preachers of the gospel, have to be sensitive to connect with the different socio-economic groups to whom we are reaching out.

In light of these realities, we will look at one simple, yet vital, principle in discipleship – relationship.

Value of Relationship

Relationship is the overarching theme of discipleship that will work across the board. Relationship will allow you to create processes, methods, and systems along the lines of discipleship that will be effective despite the time and season, geo-cultural realities, and socio-economic realities.

EXPLANATION

The word 'Christian' appears three (3) times in the Bible. 'Saints' was mentioned 81 times in ESV, 'believer/s' appears 49 times in NIV, while the word 'disciple' occurs a total of 260 times in the whole Bible. However, the term 'discipleship' will not be found in Scripture.

Discipleship is a word coined by theologians by joining two words together: 'disciple' which means, "to be a follower of Christ," and 'ship' meaning "to be contained in a journey."

1. Discipleship is to follow⁽⁴⁾ Jesus in a journey with God and other believers.

¹⁹*"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Matthew 28:19,20

In order to be able to define the phrase "*Go therefore and make disciples*", we need to understand what Jesus meant when He said: "*baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*"

EXPLANATION

Most Christians and non-Christians perceive baptism to be a religious ritual. We see in Matthew 3, Jesus allowed His cousin, John the Baptist, to baptize Him to fulfill all

righteousness. What is interesting about Jesus' baptism was not the ritual, the method, nor the practice, but what happened after His baptism.

And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him . . .

MATTHEW 3:16

To Jesus, baptism is not a ritual, but to be immersed in a relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, the Trinity is God's picture of a relationship within Himself. What makes our God unique is that He is capable of having a relationship within Himself and does not need to create humans because, within His own Godhead, He is in a relationship. Because of His own personal relationship within the Trinity, God is able to have a relationship with us.

2. Discipleship is to be immersed in a relationship⁽⁵⁾ with God and others.

In a nutshell, discipleship according to Jesus consists of two phases: First, baptizing them (people) in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Second, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

EXPLANATION

Jesus' emphasis is on obeying, and not teaching. If we are to see ourselves and others become disciples, we need to be immersed in a relationship with the Trinity and learn to obey His commands.

Jesus said

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

JOHN 14:15

According to Jesus, obeying His commands is not merely adhering to rituals or religious rules, but it is about *love* or relationships. Thus, we have the idea that discipleship is relationship.

And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.

GENESIS 2:2

If God is God and He is the Creator of the universe, why did He need to rest on the seventh day? Did He get tired after creating the heavens and the earth?

God did not rest because He was tired or exhausted; He rested to enjoy His creation.

God made man on the sixth day so that when man woke up on the 7th day, he would not see God working, but he would see God enjoying His creation. From the beginning, God's idea was to have a relationship with us.

The more we understand relationship, the more we will understand discipleship, and the more we will bring people to Christ.

According to the Westminster Shorter Catechism, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."

The more you enjoy God, the more you will glorify Him. If you are not enjoying God, you are most likely not glorifying Him. God's intent for man is to enjoy a relationship with Him. Enjoying God is the essence of being holy before God. The word 'holy' is first mentioned in the 2nd chapter of Genesis.

So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

GENESIS 2:3

Experiencing the holiness of God or being holy like God is not achieved by working harder, but it is by enjoying a relationship with Him that we become like Him and experience His holiness.

3. Discipleship is about taking on suffering⁽⁶⁾.

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Matthew 16:24

EXPLANATION

There is a second aspect in this verse: discipleship is about taking up our cross and following Jesus.

²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

JAMES 1:2-4

The only place where pain and suffering make sense is in light of a relationship. Having joy in suffering does not make sense outside the bounds of a relationship.

For instance, we would rather suffer and sacrifice for the sake of our family.

³Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope . . .
ROMANS 5:3,4

The idea that discipleship is relationship is not shallow, but the overarching theme of Scripture: rejoicing in suffering.

When we are in a relationship with others, we know how to rejoice in the midst of suffering. The Bible even encourages us that we can rejoice in our suffering because it is hinged on relationship.

2 Corinthians 1:5

For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

2 Corinthians 12:15

I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?

The Importance of Building Relationships

Our relationship with God is the essence of how we can relate with others. The stronger our relationship with God is, the easier our relationship with others will be, whether they are Christians or not. Discipleship flourishes when we enjoy our relationship with God and with others.

Discipleship is a lifelong journey of knowing God. The more you enjoy God the more you would desire to tell others about Him.

The idea of *discipleship is relationship* is captured in the story of the prodigal son:

"And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need."

Luke 15:14

- Point of need⁽⁷⁾

EXPLANATION

We need to be sensitive as we deal with others—waiting for that moment when that time of need comes. In the story, the father did not chase after his son, but actively waited for him to come back.

As disciple makers, we should be wise to wait for people to come to a point of need. Discipleship is not something we push on people. It's something that the Holy Spirit does in people as they arrive at their point of need. Our job is to build a relationship with them.

¹⁷“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!’ . . . ²⁰And he arose and came to his father.”

Luke 15:17,20

- Point of realization⁽⁸⁾

EXPLANATION

The second part is not only about the point of need—it is waiting for people to come to their senses that the answer is God.

- When we share with people, we don't push the gospel. We need to be sensitive in building and establishing relationships with people and wait for them to come to the knowledge of the Lord.
- Discipleship is building and establishing a trust relationship with people enough to be able to tell them the most important thing in their lives. When we operate in these terms, we build the relationship.

Sometimes, we make Christianity a thing to do rather than a relationship to have. The basis of our faith is a relationship with God and a relationship with others. The more we understand this, the more will we thrive, flourish, and enjoy life; and others will enjoy life with us, as well.

SUMMARY

1. As we become His disciples, we're deepening our relationship with God.
2. The word “ship” refers to a lifelong journey of knowing more about God. There is a nonstop flow of His presence in our spirit, which

causes us to enjoy that relationship and want to share that relationship to others.

3. God wants us to enjoy His relationship with us, and in turn, go out of our way to share that relationship with others.

ACTIVITY

1. As we follow Jesus, why do you think it is important to journey with other disciples?
2. How can we glorify and enjoy God?
3. How do we build relationships with people so that they can go through the discipleship journey? How do you bring people into your discipleship group?

SESSION 2 – TRUST AND LOVE

Introduction

¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Genesis 1:1,2

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Genesis 1:26

EXPLANATION

The language of the Scripture changed when God created mankind ("Let us").

- God fashioned us to be like Him. From the very beginning, you and I were wired on the inside to respond⁽¹⁾ to relationship.

Because He is a relationship within Himself, He wants us to be in a relationship the way He is. In fact, He designed us to need and desire relationship.

In the story of Adam and Eve, God was laying the very foundation of every relationship—trust. Did God know that Adam and Eve would sin against Him?

For relationships to work, we have to take the risk as God did—He invested trust. The greater the level of trust we have in God, the greater trustworthiness we have with others, and the greater ability we will have to make disciples. The less trust we have in God and less ability to win the trust of others, the less ability we have to make disciples.

- The only way for relationships to thrive and flourish is through trust⁽²⁾.

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden . . ."

Genesis 2:15,16

Genesis 2:15,16 (NIV)

¹⁵*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden . . ."*

EXPLANATION

The very first commandment of God was "*you are free*," which is a statement of love. If you receive anything that is of high value for free, this is because somebody else paid for it so that you can receive it for free.

There are two essentials for relationships:

1. Trust⁽³⁾ – the foundation for relationships
2. Love⁽⁴⁾ – the motive for relationships

From the very beginning, God wanted to establish⁽⁵⁾ a relationship with mankind.

Freedom is another word for trust.

" . . . but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Genesis 2:17

TRUST

The very first command from God was about eating. God trusted and loved Adam and Eve. The prohibition to eat from one tree was not about the selection of fruit, but a test whether they trusted God and His word. For trust and love to stand, they have to be tested. For something to be worthy of trust, it has to be proven. It is like taking vitamins that are necessary for your health. Before you take it, you must know first if they were tested and proven effective.

We need to grow in our trust in God and as trustworthy to God. We need to grow in our love for God and understanding of God's love for us. This is the measure of a disciple of God. We must trust God and God must trust us.

Here are some of the factors that will help us understand what trust is. The more people trust us, the more relationships will we have.

Truth⁽⁶⁾

The greater levels of truth we embrace, the greater levels of trust we will have.

EXPLANATION

If we are to trust people, we need to learn how to walk in truth. If we don't walk in truth, there can be no trust. The more truth there is in our lives, as we understand and grasp the truth of God's Word, the more will we operate in transparency before God and men, and the stronger our relationships will be.

Reliability⁽⁷⁾

We need to be dependable. Why do we trust God? He's reliable and consistent.

The more reliable someone is, the more trustworthy s/he becomes. The more truth and reliability we have in our lives, the greater currency of trust we have with God and greater currency we have to reach out to others.

Unity⁽⁸⁾

Unity is similar to integrity. The root word of integrity is "integer", which means "one." When you are a person of integrity, who you are on stage, in your private quarter, in public and wherever you go are one and the same. Trustworthiness requires integrity. You are the same person wherever you are.

Standards⁽⁹⁾

You cannot trust something that doesn't measure up to standard. The standard of Scripture is the standard of holiness, which is to be set apart or consecrated. The higher the standards we hold on to, the higher level of trust we will get.

Time⁽¹⁰⁾

Trust develops in relationships over time. We can trust God because He is faithful, reliable, truthful, and a person of integrity for thousands of years. The more time lapses, the longer and deeper we walk in a relationship with God.

As we walk in God's truth, become reliable and consistent with our words, keep our integrity, and live up to His standards over time, a trusting relationship between God and us, as well as with others, will grow.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Genesis 1:28

CULTIVATING TRUST
Truth
Reliability
Unity
Standards
Time

- God entrusted the earth to Adam and Eve.
- To multiply means to increase in number, be fruitful, flourish, and thrive. When we're healthy and flourishing, we will multiply.
- The idea of fruitfulness is also captured in the New Testament.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

John 15:5

The idea of thriving in God starts with a relationship. As we remain in God we will bear fruit.

EXPLANATION

Bearing fruit is not something we produce on our own, but it is the outcome of remaining in God. The stronger our relationship with God is, the more fruit we will produce in our lives.

Jesus said to His disciples:

"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."

John 15:8

The mark of a disciple is not just practicing religious rituals, but giving glory to the Father by bearing much fruit. And this happens as we remain in Him.

How do we bear fruit? By remaining in God's love. The more we build and establish a trusting and loving relationship with God, the more fruitful our lives will become.

⁹"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."

John 15:9,10

John 15:9,10 (NIV)

⁹"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love."

When speaking of love, this idea of fruitfulness is found also in Paul's letters.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22,23

EXPLANATION

Paul points out that while there are many acts of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21), there is only one fruit of the Spirit, which is *love*. When we bear the fruit of love, the result of that would be joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

LOVE

⁴Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Here's a table that compares Galatians 5 with 1 Corinthians 13.

Galatians 5:22-23	1 Corinthians 13:4-7
Love	Love
Joy	Rejoices with the truth
Peace	Does not insist on its own way, not irritable, not resentful
Patience	Patient
Kindness	Kind
Goodness	Does not rejoice at wrongdoing
Faithfulness	Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things
Gentleness	Not rude
Self-control	Does not envy, does not boast, is not arrogant

When we grow in our love for God, we will be able to produce more fruit. The reason why God wants us to grow in love is because it captures a picture of a journey. The only way we can fully mature and grow in love is to remain in our relationship with God. We can't live on previous love. Love is something that happens on a daily basis with God.

The starting point of discipleship is to have a relationship with God—to spend⁽¹¹⁾ time with Him. When we walk in the Spirit and have these characteristics, we will make disciples.

- When we continually walk with God, our fruit⁽¹²⁾ will never rot. The fruit that we bear will always be fresh.
- The way people understand love is not by you teaching it but by them experiencing⁽¹³⁾ it.

EXPLANATION

It's like chocolate. You can explain the ingredients and process of making chocolate to someone but you need to give it to them and let them taste it so that they can understand it.

The Heart of Discipleship

What does it mean when we say that discipleship is relationship? Discipleship is building trust with someone. Discipleship is not a program. It is meant to give life and build relationships.

- When you help others grow in discipleship, you don't grow them through a system, rather, they grow in trust. We have to disciple the heart, not behavior. Let us teach people to trust God. Behavioral⁽¹⁴⁾ change is not the goal, although it is a part of it. The goal is to point them to trust God and grow in their love for God.
- It's good to come back to being amateurs and acknowledge our mistakes, by humbling ourselves before God. When we start to act like professionals⁽¹⁵⁾, it stops us from growing.
- The essence of discipleship is not a program, a method, or a system. It's the heart⁽¹⁶⁾ that says, "God, I love you and I trust you. As I grow in my relationship with You, help me to help others trust and love you."

ACTIVITY

1. Among the five factors that build trust with people, which one do you think you are strong at? Which one do you think you need to improve on?
2. What are some specific action steps we need to take in order to bear more fruit as disciples of Christ and as disciple makers?
3. How can we show love in practical ways to those who attend our discipleship group?

SESSION 3 – FORGIVENESS AND COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

In the last session, we looked at the two essentials of relationships: love and trust. There are two other legs that are vital for relationship to stand the test of time: forgiveness and communication.

In Genesis 3, God instilled His trust and fruitfulness to Adam and Eve when He put them in the garden, a place of security.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

Genesis 3:1

- The essence of this verse is temptation. Temptation begins when we start to question God's word. The more truth we have in our lives, the greater ability we have that we will not be deceived⁽¹⁾ by the enemy.
- Discipleship is teaching people to trust⁽²⁾ the truth of God's word.

²And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

Genesis 3:2,3

EXPLANATION

Adam failed to disciple Eve; she was tempted because she lacked the fullness of the truth of God. The Word of God says, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden"; but Eve's response was, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden."

In this particular case, Adam, who was entrusted with the word of God, did not give Eve the fullness of the truth of God's Word. He was even standing beside Eve when she was tempted.

- When we disciple people, we disciple them in the fullness of the truth of God's Word. The more they trust that and the more they know His Word, the better they will be at following⁽³⁾ God.

⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. ⁸And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and

his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

Genesis 3:6-8

When we fall into temptation, we begin to cover ourselves. When making disciples, we need to face the truth: arriving at the truth, acceptance of the truth, and repentance from the sin committed is the only way for freedom.

People who sin avoid God because of the guilt and shame sin causes.

From the notes of the Life Application Study Bible:

“The thought of two humans covered with fig leaves trying to hide from the all-seeing, all-knowing God is humorous. How could they be so silly as to think they could actually hide? Yet we do the same, acting as though God doesn’t know what we’re doing. Have the courage to share all you do and think with Him. And don’t try to hide—it can’t be done. Honesty will strengthen your relationship with God.”¹

But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?”

Genesis 3:9

This question was about where they were in their trust in God and the condition of their hearts. The question really asks: “Where are you in your heart?”

God was neither in a hurry nor pressing for them to answer where they were physically. He asked for them to realize how far they were from Him.

As disciple-makers, we should intentionally ask questions rather than preach away. God did not preach, He asked questions. When you are discipling a person, that is what you should look at—where they are in their faith, in their trust in God, in the issues of life, in their marriage. Discipleship is not just going through a lesson; it is not just finishing through a booklet. The more you ask people where they are or how they are, the better your relationship with them will be.

And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.”

Genesis 3:10

Adam's response perfectly captures our nature. When disconnected from God, our lives become the daily management of our fears, nakedness, insecurities, and lies.

¹ Life Application Study Bible. NLT: 2nd Edition. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2004)

¹¹He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹²The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." ¹³Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Genesis 3:11-13

We would rather be known for who we are not rather than who we truly are because of our insecurity. We have become masters at hiding.

But more than that, God asks other questions.

- *"Who told you that you are naked?"* – This is a question of trust. God is asking: Who are you listening to? Who are you believing now? Whose words are you trusting now?
- *"Have you eaten of the tree?"* – God is asking: Do you know the truth? You may know the truth, but the person you're talking to may not know the truth. Our job as disciple makers is to help people patiently arrive at the truth.
- God is basically saying: What's the truth about our relationship?

Adam answered in verse 12 with: *"the woman that you gave me"*. In other words Adam was saying, "I don't trust you, and I don't trust her". The trust has been broken. When trust is broken everything else fades because the foundation of relationship is trust.

In verse 13, God is asking what is the truth. Truth is deeply seated in your heart and not in your head. In Eve's head, she thinks that the serpent's deception is the sole reason why she ate the forbidden fruit. But the truth is when the woman saw that the fruit was enticing, she ate of it (Genesis 3:6).

- Helping people arrive at the truth is not easy. It takes a lot of patience and kindness⁽⁴⁾ to speak the truth.

In God's mercy, here is what He did.

To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."

Genesis 3:16

EXPLANATION

For the first time in Scripture, pain is mentioned because Adam and Eve would not accept truth.

- Pain⁽⁵⁾ is God's way of bringing the truth in our lives.

Pain allows us to understand what the truth is. Instituting pain is actually God's act of mercy. God gives a prelude - "If you keep on sinning, the pain will get worse and lead to death." He extends His mercy to men by giving them pain, hoping that they will realize their sin and restore their relationship with God.

- Adam, instead of responding in humility and fear of the Lord, changed his wife's name to Eve, which means mother of all the living. It was a prideful proclamation of mankind's insistence to live apart from God.

The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.
Genesis 3:20

Mankind, in this act, looks up to God and says, "We will live without You from this day forward." In the original sin, man's trust in God was destroyed.

- God responded by taking an animal and covered Adam and Eve with mercy.

And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

Genesis 3:21

Victor Hamilton comments: "Verse 21 serves as a contrast with verse 7, the covering of fig leaves versus the covering with tunics of animal skins. The first is an attempt to cover one's self, the second is accepting a covering from another. The first is manmade and the second is God-made. Adam and Eve are in need of salvation that comes from without. God needs to do for them what they are unable to do for themselves."²

- You need forgiveness and communication in order for your relationships to flourish.
- God patiently communicated with Adam and Eve. He asked questions because a relationship requires interaction. A relationship involves speaking and listening to each other. The more we deal with people, the more we should master the art of communicating with them.

Communication

- The more we build relationships⁽⁶⁾, the more we need to master the art of

² Victor Hamilton. The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17: The New International Commentary On The Old Testament

communication.

EXPLANATION

Small groups are held for the purpose of communicating the truth of God's word in a clear way.

- The reason we do small groups and use tools like *ONE 2 ONE* is because we need to communicate⁽⁷⁾ the truth of God's word, not run a program.
- Communication is an important facet of discipleship. This is exercised through prayer.

As we pray, we connect to God and connect other people to the Lord as we pray for them. Through prayer we connect with other people, whether through intercession or praying in agreement with another person. Communication is an exchange—listening intently and understanding. Beyond the discipleship program, we have to keep encouraging people to be more intimate in their relationship with God.

- When we grow in the trust and love of God, we're also better able to help others grow in discipleship.

The more we spend time and work with other people, in that measure we will also grow in our confidence and trust upon them.

Forgiveness

- When our trust and our love fail, relationships can only be restored through forgiveness. It is the reset⁽⁸⁾ button to every failed relationship.
- When our relationship fails, we need to use the same measure of forgiveness that God had.

" . . . and forgive us ours debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Matthew 6:12

- God extended mercy despite the fact that Adam and Eve merited punishment.

EXPLANATION

By a measure of forgiveness, relationships can be restored. The greater the trust, the stronger the relationship. The power of God's love is displayed through an act of forgiveness. The gospel is the forgiveness of God. We have to live out the gospel.

- The more we restore people in forgiveness and relationship⁽⁹⁾, the better life

becomes for us.

SUMMARY

The more we understand the truth of the gospel, the more will we find our discipleship-relationships flourish and bear fruit the way it's meant to be.

Recommended books to read:

- *The Lego Principle* by Joey Bonifacio
- *WikiChurch* by Steve Murrell
- *100 Years from Now: Sustaining a Movement for Generations* by Steve Murrell

ACTIVITY

1. Why do you think it is important to encourage people in your Victory group to read, study, and trust God's Word?
2. What is one thing you can do in order to improve your listening skills and build stronger relationships with people?

ASSIGNMENT

Choose one book on discipleship. Read it and write a one-page reflection paper.

1. *WikiChurch* by Steve Murrell
2. *The Lego Principle* by Joey Bonifacio