# A New Way of Living: Disciplemakers

**D-Group Study Guide – Week 3: Spiritual Fathers and Mothers | Relational Discipleship**

**1. <u>Social/Fellowship Time</u> (10-15 minutes)**

**2. <u>Content/Spiritual Conversations</u> (30-35 minutes)**
*Debriefing from sermon clip: "Spiritual Fathers and Mothers | Relational Discipleship" (previous week's homework)*

## • Debrief – Scripture Deep Dive

We see what it looks like to be a spiritual father or mother in Paul's letters to the Corinthians and in Paul's relationship with his spiritual son, Timothy.

**1. READ 1 Corinthians 4:14-17 — Guides vs. fathers**

*"I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church." (ESV)*

**Notice the word:** The Greek word for "guide" here is *paidagogos*. In a well-to-do Roman household, the *paidagogos* was a hired servant who walked the children to school and taught them manners – but only for a season, and only for a specific job. A father is different. A father doesn't just teach morality; he imparts his very way of life – eye to eye, heart to heart, season to season.

We live in a world with thousands of teachers – podcasts, YouTube, TikTok – but very few spiritual fathers and mothers who let us watch their lives up close. And that matters, because **more is caught than taught.** Disciples are made when someone who has walked with Jesus invites another person into their life and passes on their very way of following Him.

1. **QUESTION:** In the video, Pastor Jake says we have "thousands of guides, thousands of tutors," and then asks, "Where are our fathers? Where are our mothers?" What can a spiritual father or mother give you that a teacher you only hear on a stage or through earbuds cannot?
2. **QUESTION:** Research shows that imitation is the primary way human beings learn – babies learn by watching their parents face to face. Paul says, "Be imitators of me" (and later, "Imitate me as I imitate Christ," 1 Corinthians 11:1). What is one thing you learned about following Jesus by watching someone's life rather than hearing a lesson? Could you say "imitate me" to someone right now? Why or why not?

3. **QUESTION:** Pastor Jake points out that Gen Z and millennials are coming back to church – and then says to the older generations, "We're watching you." Who might be watching your life with Jesus right now (kids, grandkids, coworkers, younger believers at church)? How does that make you feel?

**2. Paul shows us the first two ways to disciple someone: Take them with you, and teach them truth. READ Acts 16:1-3 and 2 Timothy 1:5 — Paul's spiritual son**

*"Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him…" (Acts 16:1-3a, ESV)*

*"I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well." (2 Timothy 1:5, ESV)*

**Notice what's missing:** Timothy's father. Many scholars believe his Greek father never put his faith in Jesus and may have left Timothy's life early on. Yet Paul saw something in this young man, took him under his wing, and called him "my true child in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2). And notice how simple Paul's first step was – he was *already going* on his missionary journey. All he did was take Timothy along.

But Paul didn't just hang out with Timothy. He deposited truth into him: "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me" (2 Timothy 1:13). "Continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it" (2 Timothy 3:14).

1. **QUESTION:** Lois and Eunice faithfully passed their faith on to Timothy – and Pastor Jake encourages every mom, grandmother, and single parent that what they're doing matters. Who has God placed in your home or family that you are already investing in? How can the group encourage you?
2. **QUESTION:** Paul was already going – he simply took Timothy with him. Pastor Jake suggests taking someone to the grocery store, your kids' games, the gym, or on a run. What is already on your calendar this week that you could invite someone into?
3. **QUESTION:** A common hang-up is "I don't know enough to disciple someone." Pastor Jake gives two answers: discipling someone throws you into the deep end of learning (it refines both directions), and you don't have to be an expert – you just have to be a few steps ahead. How does that change the way you see your own readiness? *(Encourage them to share honestly about feelings of inadequacy.)*

**3. Paul shows us the last two ways to disciple someone: Trust them with responsibility, and tell them who they can become. READ 1 Thessalonians 3:2 and 1 Timothy 4:11-12**

*"...and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith." (1 Thessalonians 3:2, ESV)*

*"Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." (1 Timothy 4:11-12, NIV)*

For nearly two decades, Timothy traveled with Paul – but he wasn't on the sideline holding a clipboard. Paul sent him out alone to preach, teach, and shepherd, and called him "God's coworker." Real discipleship requires delegating real authority, sometimes at a risk. And Timothy, though gifted, was at times timid and afraid of conflict. So Paul publicly confirmed his identity and calling: You have worth. You are called to this. I see what God put in you.

1. **QUESTION:** In the video, Pastor Jake tells how a mentor turned to a 13-year-old Matt Redman, who had never played in front of anyone, and said, "We need you tonight." Has anyone ever trusted you with responsibility before you felt ready? What did that do in you?
2. **QUESTION:** Why do you think it's hard to give away real responsibility to someone you're discipling? *(i.e. it's faster to do it yourself, fear they'll fail, wanting control)*
3. **QUESTION:** Pastor Jake says almost every young man and woman wonders, "Will I ever be enough?" – as a parent, a spouse, a Christian, or for God's calling. Who in your life needs someone to look them in the eye and say, "I see what God put in you"? What would you say to them?
4. **QUESTION:** Finish this sentence: "I want to be a spiritual father/mother because _____." *(What are your motivations?)*

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## • Debrief – Practical Application

1. **Pick your Timothy.** Look back at the running list of names you started in Week 1. Pray over it this week and ask God to highlight one person you could begin to invest in – someone a few steps behind you who may be missing a spiritual father or mother.
2. **Take them with you.** Look at your calendar for this week. Choose one thing you're already doing (a grocery run, your kids' game, a workout, a walk, a meal) and invite someone along. No agenda needed – just let them be with you.
3. **Tell them who they can become.** Think of one person – a child, grandchild, coworker, or younger believer – who needs to hear that God sees them. Send them a text, write a note, or tell them face to face: "I see what God put in you."

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## • Debrief – Closing Prayer

Close by thanking God for the spiritual fathers and mothers who have shaped each person in the group. Then pray by name for the “Timothy” each person is considering, and ask the Holy Spirit to give everyone the courage to take someone with them, teach them truth, trust them with responsibility, and tell them who they can become in Christ.

**3. Homework for next week**

- Watch week 4 of the Disciplemakers video content: [Week 4 title]
    - https://thefreshwater.church/2026/11/disciplemakers26-w4/