

A Discipleship Journey

for

*First Congregational Church
of Barrington*



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Introduction

A primary goal of the intentional disciple-making journey is to develop believers who through their spiritual journey glorify God through participation in his redemptive plan. Whether one is just starting out or well traveled it is always helpful to understand both this broader context and the process for this journey. This journey is about becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ — a believer who recognizes the importance of becoming like Christ and in doing so begins an intentional journey upward, inward and outward in an effort to follow, be with, and abide in Christ. This process of becoming a disciple is consistently grounded in three essential components, (1) making a decision, (2) taking deliberate actions, and (3) ensuring accountability. You'll read more about these later on.

Although this big picture is helpful, we recognize that like any journey one needs to take smaller, appropriate steps towards the end goal. Thus, our journey is marked by stages and these stages reflect the disciple-making journey as evidenced in the Gospels. During Jesus' ministry people came to him to see and hear what he had to say. After listening some decided to follow him; in following, some were committed to remaining with him, and finally some decided to abide with him. Perhaps, you've already noticed, each of these stages requires a decision to pursue Jesus more deeply as well as appropriate actions to take as the journey becomes more challenging.

So, as you heed Jesus' call to "Come and Follow Me" this will require a decision on your part to pursue the *Journey Inward* as you experience Christ through learning and developing spiritual disciplines (*i.e.* Bible Study, Prayer, Worship, Evangelism, Serving, Stewardship and others), the *Journey Upward* as you deepen your knowledge of Christ through the Truths in his Word, and the *Journey Outward* as you learn to share Christ with those who are lost. This document focuses on the *Journey Inward* and the Spiritual Disciplines.

Shaping a Discipleship Journey for FCCB

During the Fall of 2004, the newly elected Elders and pastors began discussion concerning the overall direction of the church. Early on, a well-integrated, long-term discipleship journey was identified as a key priority in shaping the future of the church.

Three core aspects were identified that would characterize an intentional Discipleship journey at FCCB. These core aspects were

- (1) **A personal decision** to become involved in intentional discipleship,
- (2) **Actions to take** toward spiritual growth focused largely on the Classical Spiritual Disciplines
- (3) **Accountability** through participation in a group context, or more rarely one-on-one.

The Men's Retreat during the Fall of 2005 with pastor Gili Indrie challenged many to begin thinking more about discipleship at FCCB. Since that time the Elders have devoted themselves to reading, discussion, meetings with others involved in discipleship, committing thoughts to paper, and praying for wisdom and direction concerning a Discipleship Journey for the church.

During the Winter and Spring of 2006, the Elders initiated significant contact with a group known as T-Net (Training-Network) that provides guidance and support for churches who desire to shape their future through a well-integrated and long-term discipleship journey.

This document summarizes the overall content of a Discipleship Journey for FCCB. However, the shaping a Discipleship Journey for FCCB will always be an ongoing process.

Discipleship as a Core Value of FCCB

A Church with intentional Disciple-making will have the following characteristics tightly woven into the very fabric of its existence. These core values will guide the church in determining which structures or programs to maintain (or discontinue) and how to best utilize our financial resources. With these core values we hope to involve 70-80% of the church in active discipleship, and add 5-10% new Christians each year to the church family.

Core Mission

Leading people to Christ and discipling them is the core mission of the church
Ministries and resources of the church are aligned with the mission/purpose/vision and values of the church

Spiritual Maturity

There is a clear description of spiritual maturity
There is a visible path for developing spiritual maturity

Comprehensive Outreach

People are consistently coming to faith in Christ through relational networks
People are living out the reality of the gospel among the lost

Disciple-making Leadership

Pastors and key leaders are modeling Disciple-making
Life-to-Life mentoring is lived out in the context of biblical community

Intentional Infrastructure

Church groups; large, mid and small size are intentionally designed and aligned with the Mission, Purpose, and Vision of the church.
Church groups are relationally connected to facilitate spiritual formation

Vision for Multiplication

Pastors and church leaders model spiritual multiplication and seek to multiply the Disciple-making vision to other churches locally and through overseas missions.

Definition of a Disciple

Disciples are persons of faith who are apprenticed to their master Jesus Christ, from whom they learn skills in faith. Disciples are on an intentional journey toward a growing intimacy with Christ, a growing intimacy with fellow believers, and a growing relationship with and commitment to reaching the lost.

As disciples travel on this journey they are transformed from “tourists” with a casual interest in Christ, to those who follow him daily, who learn to be with Christ as the years pass, and finally to remain fully in Christ traveling with with him in every aspect of their life for all of their life.

Discipleship Journey at FCCB

Discipleship at FCCB is an intentional journey through which we will, together, make progress in our spiritual maturity as we seek to develop a growing intimacy with Christ, a growing intimacy with fellow believers, and a growing relationship with and commitment to reaching the lost.

The discipleship journey at FCCB will be characterized by three essential components: Decision, Deliberate Actions, and Accountability.

Decision

Discipleship at FCCB begins and continues with a decision. Simply, one must be intentional about becoming a disciple of Jesus - it does not happen by chance, but rather by choice. We must choose, and as the Apostle Peter says “make every effort” to enter the pathway of the Spiritual Disciplines as a means of becoming more like Christ.

Deliberate Actions

Discipleship at FCCB will focus on a progressive development of the Spiritual Disciplines in each believer’s life, a deepening understanding of sound doctrine, and a growing ability to share the gospel and give answers to those who inquire about the gospel.

Accountability

The discipleship journey will contain its up and downs corporately and individually and consequently at FCCB each disciple will be encouraged to establish fellowship with a person or group of persons through a small group that will encourage and hold one accountable to growth and development, step by step.

As we invest ourselves in the Disciplines and place ourselves in the path of God’s grace, we will find that indeed “he has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” And “ if we possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep us from being ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (II Peter 1:3-11)

Overview of the Discipleship Journey

	“Come and See” (First steps with Christ)	“Follow Me” (Daily walk with Christ)	“Be With Me” (Year by year walk with Christ)	“Remain in Me” (Lifelong Journey with Christ)
Decision	To have faith in Christ	To follow Christ	To become more like Christ	To be fully committed to Christ for all of life
Actions	Turn to God and trust Christ as Savior. Understand basic truths. Begin to practice a Christian lifestyle. Form relationships with the Church .	Learn and practice foundational Spiritual Disciplines. Live in Christian Community. Understand gifts and begin to use them. Grow in service. Gain a Christian world-view.	Deepen and expand their Spiritual Disciplines. Deepen love of God and neighbor Walk by faith Use gifts in service and mission	Practice of any Spiritual Discipline needed for further growth. Deep relationships and service within the community. Actively leading others to Christ and into discipleship.
Accountability	Participation in small groups or time with an individual for the purpose of learning about belief in Christ	Participation in a small group for the purpose of strengthening their Spiritual Disciplines and their walk with Christ.	Continued participation in a small group, including developing leadership skills and leading others.	Long-term small group involvement and commitment to others in the group.

Classical Spiritual Disciplines and Discipleship

As a Disciple travels on the path of Discipleship the Classical Spiritual Disciplines will be a significant means of developing a growing intimacy with Christ, fellow believers, and a passionate desire to reach and disciple the lost.

The following paragraphs establish a Biblical basis for the disciplines and their purpose in the Disciples life.

The Apostle Peter instructs us with these words: “Therefore, *prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled [disciplined]*; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do: for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” (I Peter 1:13-16)

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this reason, *make every effort [exercise discipline]* 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, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, 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. But if anyone does not have them, he is near-sighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling an election sure. For *if you do these things, you will never fail*, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (II Peter 1:3-11)

The Apostle Paul also instructs his disciple Timothy with these words “*Discipline yourself* for the purpose of godliness.” (I Timothy 4:7, NASB) Italics and bracketed comments added.

The classical Spiritual Disciplines are the primary means by which we can “make every effort” and “discipline ourselves” in the Spirit-filled pursuit of holiness and Godliness.

The Disciplines will not be undertaken as additional requirements or tasks of being a Christian but rather as essential components in the course of everyday life that will enable us to be in a position where God can work in and through us. The Disciplines are not to be "mechanical" things which we do, but rather

they are to be a means by which place ourselves in the path of God's grace and seek Him much as Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus placed themselves in Jesus' path and sought Him (Luke 18:35-19:10). As with these two seekers, we will find God willing to have mercy on us and to have communion with us, and in the course of time we will be transformed by Him from one level of Christlikeness to another (II Corinthians 3:18)

The disciplines fall roughly into three general groups which echo the three directions of our journey into Christ. Many of the disciplines are listed and described in the appendix.

Worship – disciplines that develop our “journey upward”

Becoming Christ-like – disciplines that develop our “journey inward”

Reaching/serving others - disciplines that develop our “journey outward”

The purpose of each and every Spiritual Discipline is to move us step by step toward greater Godliness and holiness. And holiness is simply this: to be whole before God and wholly alive in Him. God has always intended that his people become like him - holy, whole.

The Spiritual Disciplines are, as one author Mark Buchanan, has called them “holy habits.” He writes “I want to call them holy habits because, as with all habits, they are practices that for a while we think about and work at but eventually weave so deeply into the rhythm of our lives that they define us. They become *our* ways.” “They are often awkward for us at first and produce dubious results. But persisted in, they become natural and create beauty.”¹

Furthermore he writes the holy habits are “the disciplines, the routines by which we stay alive and focused on Him. At first we choose them and carry them out; after a while they are part of who we are. And they carry us.”

To pursue these “holy habits” is to respond to the call to “Love the Lord your God with all your “heart, soul, mind, and strength.” and to “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12:30,31)

As the Apostle Peter also reminds us “He has given us everything we need for life and godliness.” And to ignore the path set before us is to become “nearsighted and blind, forgetting that we have been cleansed from sin.” (II Peter 1:9)

¹ Mark Buchanan, *Your God Is Too Safe*, p 127

Discipleship Resources

The Disciplines

Many of the disciplines relate to several aspects of our walk with God. Here, they are presented under the following headings, with reference to the three 'Journeys.' Most of these disciplines have been long-recognized by the church, but the list is not all inclusive.

<i>Worship</i>	<i>Journey Upward</i>
<i>Opening myself to God</i>	<i>Journey Inward</i>
<i>Relinquishing My False Self</i>	<i>Journey Inward</i>
<i>Sharing My Life With Others</i>	<i>Journey Outward</i>
<i>Hearing God's Word</i>	<i>Journey Inward and Upward</i>
<i>Acting Out The Love Of Christ</i>	<i>Journey Outward</i>
<i>Prayer</i>	<i>Journey Upward, Inward, Outward</i>

Worship

Celebration	to take joyful, passionate pleasure in God and the radically glorious nature of God's people, Word, world and purposes
Gratitude	to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting to live with a grateful heart, cognizant of God's work in my life and my abundant resources
Holy Communion	to be nourished by Christ, tasting the sweet depths of redemption
Rule for life	to live a sane and holy rhythm that reflects a deep love for God and respect for how he has made me
Sabbath	to set apart one day a week for rest and worship of God
Worship	to honor and adore the Trinity as the supreme treasure of life

Opening Myself To God

Contemplation	to wake up to the presence of God in all things
Examen	to notice both God and my God-given desires throughout the day
Practicing the Presence	to develop a continual openness and awareness of Christ's presence living in me
Rest	to honor God and my human limitations through restful rhythms
Retreat	to make space in my life for God alone

Self-Care	to value myself as my heavenly Father values me
Simplicity	to uncomplicate and untangle my life so I can focus on what really matters
Slowing	to curb my addiction to busyness, hurry and workaholism; to learn to savor the moment
Journaling	to be alert to my life through writing and reflecting on God's presence and activity in, around and through me
Teachability	to remain a lifelong learner who is continually open to the fresh wind of the Holy Spirit
Unplugging	to be fully present to and uninterrupted in my interactions with God and others

Relinquishing My False Self

Confession and Self-Examination	to surrender my weaknesses and faults to the forgiving love of Christ and intentionally desire and embrace practices that lead to transformation
Detachment	to nurture the spirit of trust that is attached to God alone
Discernment	to delight in and recognize the voice and will of God
Secrecy	to follow the simple and often hidden way of Christ
Silence	to free myself from the addiction to and distraction of noise so I can be totally present to the Lord; to open myself to God in the place beyond words
Solitude	to leave people behind and enter into time alone with God
Spiritual Direction	to give caring attention to my relationship with God, accompanied by the prayerful presence of someone who helps me listen well to God
Submission	to have Jesus as the Master of my life in absolutely every way

Sharing My Life With Others

Accountability Partner	to give a regular and honest account of my choices, priorities and temptations to a godly and wise companion who points me to Christ
Chastity	to revere God by receiving and honoring my body and the bodies of others with purity of thought and action
Community	to express and reflect the self-donating love of the Trinity by investing in and journeying with others
Covenant Group	to enter into authentic, confidential and healing relationships with a committed group of fellow pilgrims
Discipling	to be in a relationship where I am encouraged or where I encourage another to become an apprentice of Jesus
Hospitality	to be a safe person who offers others the grace, shelter and presence of Jesus
Mentoring	to accompany and encourage others to grow to their God-given

	potential
Service	to reflect the helping, caring and sharing love of God in the world
Small Group	to make my spiritual journey with a community of trusted friends
Spiritual Friendship	to develop a friendship that encourages and challenges me to love God with all my heart, soul, strength and mind
Unity	to live in harmony with Christ's desire for the church to be one; to be a bridge-builder and peacemaker in the body of Christ
Witness	to reveal the life-changing love of Jesus to others

Hearing God's Word

Bible Study	to know what the Bible says and how it intersects with my life
Devotional Reading	to prayerfully encounter and surrender to the Living God through attending to Scripture
Meditation	to more deeply gaze on God in his works and words
Memorization	to carry the life-shaping words of God in me at all times and in all places

Acting Out the Love of Christ

Care of the Earth	to honor the Creator by loving, nurturing and stewarding his creation
Compassion	to become the healing presence of Christ to others
Control of the Tongue	to turn the destructive way I use words into authentic, loving and healing speech
Humility	to become like Jesus in his willingness to choose the hidden way of love rather than the way of power
Justice	to love others by seeking their good, protection, gain and fair treatment
Stewardship	to live as a steward of God's resources in all areas of life; to live out of the awareness that nothing I have is my own
Truth Telling	to live an authentically truthful life

Prayer

Breath Prayer	to pray a simple, intimate prayer of heartfelt desire before God
Centering Prayer	to quiet the heart and rest in God alone
Contemplative Prayer	to develop an open, restful receptivity to the Trinity that enables me to always be with God just as I am
Conversational Prayer	to talk naturally and unself-consciously to God in prayer times with others

Fasting	to let go of an appetite in order to seek God on matters of deep concern for others, myself and the world
Fixed-Hour Prayer	to stop my work and pray throughout the day
Inner-Healing Prayer	to assist the emotionally broken and wounded as they seek God for the healing only he can give
Intercessory Prayer	to turn my concerns and worries into prayer; to enter God's heart for the world and then pray from there
Labyrinth Prayer	to make a quiet, listening pilgrimage to God
Liturgical Prayer	to open myself to God through established patterns or traditions of written prayers and readings
Prayer of Recollection	to rest in God, allowing him to calm and heal my fragmented and distracted self
Prayer Partners	to share the journey of prayer with a trusted companion
Praying Scripture	to allow God to shape my prayer life through the words of Scripture
Prayer Walking	to align myself, while walking in particular places, with Christ and his intercession for the kingdom to come

Further Reading

There are many excellent books and study guides available on the Spiritual Disciplines. The books that were most influential in shaping a Discipleship Journey at FCCB to date are listed below.

Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*

Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy, Spirit of the Disciplines, and The Great Omission*

Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life (and study guide)*

Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*

Mark Buchannan, *Your God Is Too Safe*

Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience In The Same Direction*

Ruth Barton, *Invitation to Silence and Solitude*

Ruth Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*

Dallas Willard and Jan Johnson, *“Renovation of the Heart in Daily Practice”*

Jane Rubietta, *Resting Place*

Luann Budd, *Journal Keeping*

Lisa Graham McMinn, *The Contented Soul*