

THE
GOSPEL
DISCIPLE
LIFE

A Quick Start Guide for a
Micro-Group Strategy for
Making Disciples
that Makes Disciples



By David Putman

Introduction

I longed for something simple. My religion had worn me down. I could no longer keep up with its demands. I was a broken man. My son was in Afghanistan. I had just been notified that an Improvised Explosive Device had hit him. I didn't know if I would see him again. He survived this attack, but what about the next one?

The soil of my heart was broken and fertile. That's when I began reading through the gospels. For over a year, I didn't read anything else. I was on a journey. It was a kind of detoxing from religion for me. As I read, I wrote my thoughts down. When I later reflected on those words, I noticed a pattern. Without realizing it over that year, I had begun every single journal entry with this prayer, "Jesus, show me your way."

Jesus heard my prayers. He showed me His way, and I rediscovered the simplicity of Jesus and His ways. That's when I became a gospel disciple. That's why I developed The Gospel Disciple Life. Will you join me on this journey?

The Gospel Disciple Life

The Gospel Disciple Life is a simple disciple-making process that can be implemented by any person, at any time, in any place. The goal of The Gospel Disciple Life is to (re)discover the simplicity of Jesus and His ways by reading through the gospels in groups of three called micro-groups.

- Each micro-group consists of three people. A facilitator (first person) invites one person. That one person asks one additional person.
- Micro-groups can multiply at any time but are encouraged to complete the Gospel of Mark before they do.

Micro-Groups consist of two rhythms:

1. Daily Bible Reading – Your daily Bible reading plan will take you through the gospels one chapter at a time beginning in Mark. The goal is to complete five chapters each week.
2. Weekly Micro-Group – Meet with your group of three, either face-to-face or virtually, for approximately 30 to 90 minutes.

Principles: The key to the success of The Gospel Disciple Life is following four key principles.

- *Simple enough to reproduce.* Micro-groups are intended for rapid multiplication and can be led by anyone, at any time, in any place. A healthy micro-group can consist of pre-disciples, new disciples, growing disciples, leading disciples, and catalytic disciples (see types of disciples). The goal is not to control them but to allow them to multiply through natural relational networks.

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- *Scripture is our curriculum.* Since Mark is the shortest and, in some ways, the easiest to read, it is recommended that your micro-group start here. It will take approximately three weeks to finish, reading one chapter daily. It is important to note that it is not necessary to complete all four gospels to multiply. Some groups will be ready to multiply after completing their first gospel.
- *Holy Spirit is our teacher.* The key to The Gospel Disciple Life is learning to hear and follow Jesus through His Spirit. While reading the Scripture each day, ask, "What is Jesus saying to me?" and "What am I going to do about it?"
- *Following Jesus is our ultimate objective.* A disciple is a follower of Jesus who is learning to live like Jesus, love like Jesus, and leave what Jesus left behind. Therefore, our goal is to learn to see God at work, hear His voice, understand His ways, and follow Him, which is why we continually ask, "What is Jesus saying to me through His Scripture?" and "What am I going to do about it?"
- *Relationships are our vehicle.* The gospel naturally travels from one relationship to another. Micro-groups are limited to three and are started when you invite your one, and your one invites their one.

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Gospel Disciples

In my observation, there are all kinds of disciples. I would go as far as to say we are all disciples of something or someone. The question is, "What kind of disciple are we?" For years I was a disciple of church growth. Everything I did was about planting bigger and better churches. Then I heard the call of Jesus clearly to come follow Him. That's when I became a gospel disciple. I started by reading and rereading the Gospels over and over again. It seemed to me that if I wanted to be a disciple of Jesus, I should start by getting to know Him through His Word. For over a year, I read from the Gospels only. It was a kind of religious detox for me. It was at that point I rediscovered the simplicity of Jesus and His ways.

A gospel disciple is simply a follower of Jesus that is learning to live out the realities and implications of the Gospels by living like Jesus, loving like Jesus, and leaving what Jesus left behind (those who live like Him and love like Him).

Regardless of where you are on The Gospel Disciple Life, rediscover the simplicity of Jesus and His ways. The pathway below is a simple way of looking at this journey and assessing for yourself where you might be.



Micro Group Structure

A micro-group is a rapidly reproducing, disciple-making structure. You will find that micro-groups are one of the most reproducible approaches to disciple-making because they can be implemented by any person, at any time, in any place. Here are some examples of how they can be used in different environments:

- Church - If your church doesn't currently have a discipleship program, you can implement micro-groups as a simple life-on-life approach.
- Church Planting - If you are planting a church, this may be one of the best ways to develop a core group. All you have to do is find your one and ask your one to find their one, and you have a micro-group. Once you have two micro-groups, you can begin bringing them together.
- Small Group - If you have an active small group ministry, you can introduce micro-groups as a means for doing life-on-life discipleship.
- Discipleship (D) Groups - If you have discipleship groups, you already have a micro-group strategy, but why not take it to the next level by taking a gospel only approach for a season of rediscovering the simplicity of Jesus and His ways.
- Workplace - These groups are designed to do anywhere and are an excellent tool for making disciples where you work.
- Family - Many of us have a burden for discipling our family members, but don't know-how. The best place to begin a micro-group is in your home. Children of all ages can be a part of a micro-group.
- Neighbors and Relational Networks - What better way to love your neighbor than do a simple Gospel Life micro-group.

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Invite Your One

Inviting your one is the secret sauce to micro-groups. Since micro-groups are designed to reproduce rapidly, they must be simple to start. All it takes is inviting your one. Who do you know that you could invite that would commit to reading through the Gospel of Mark with you? Once you identify your one, ask them to invite their one. When you become an inviter, you become an owner, and it provides a kind of glue that bonds the group together.

Limit Your Micro Groups to Three

The reason we limit our groups to three is that it forces us to reproduce rapidly. Once you start reading through the Gospels, you will want to invite other people into your group, but it is essential to resist the temptation to get bigger. Instead of getting bigger than three, emphasize getting bigger by multiplying. Go ahead and start a new micro-group whenever it makes sense.

Eliminate Addition

The key to rapid multiplication is eliminating addition. By inviting your one and limiting your micro-group to three, you eliminate addition and embed multiplication from day one. If you invited your one, congratulations, you have just multiplied. Resist the temptation to enlarge your group beyond three. By limiting your group to three, to include additional people in a disciple-making process, you will need to start a new group. This simple way of eliminating addition will ensure multiplication and allow you to reproduce rapidly. Eliminating addition is the secret sauce behind micro-groups.

Include Different Types of Disciples

Through the years, I have learned the value of including disciples that are at different places along the disciple making pathway. Whenever possible, include pre-disciples and new disciples with growing, multiplying, or catalytic disciples (see pathway). As a growing, multiplying, or catalytic disciple, you can learn as much from a pre or new disciple as they can from you.

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Read Through the Gospels

Once you have a micro-group of three, you will read through the Gospels, one chapter each day, five days a week. As you read, you will use the S.O.W.I.N.G journaling approach to make your way through the gospels. A reading plan is included and begins with the Gospel of Mark. You will also find a journal template that you can duplicate and use.

Facilitate Weekly Micro Group Sessions

Once your first week of reading through the Gospels is complete, you will meet together to debrief your gospel reading with an emphasis on what Jesus is saying to you and what you are doing about it. Again, keep in mind that our only objective is to learn to follow Jesus as gospel disciples. These weekly micro-group sessions are designed to be easy to facilitate and reproduce around what is called the 6Cs (See below).

Emphasize Following Jesus

Remember, we are asking two key questions every week as we seek to learn how to follow Jesus: What is Jesus saying to me, and what am I doing about it? The Gospel Disciple Life identifies with three primary relationships. They are family, servant, and missionary. Following Jesus will always have implications for how we are relating to each other, serving others, and living a life on mission. This is covered in detail in the advanced training. However, keep in mind that in facilitating your micro-group, you will want to encourage all three as part of the application.

Journaling through the Gospels: S.O.W.I.N.G.

He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times" (Mark 4:2-8).

In this parable the farmer sows the word...like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown (Mark 4: 14 & 20).

Sowing the Word in our lives is an integral part of The Gospel Disciple Life. In the parable above, Jesus taught us that when we sow the Word in good soil, it produces a crop that multiplies and multiplies. We must sow the Word in our lives and in the lives of others.

Gospel Disciple Journal - Is a journal designed to help keep you organized, journal your thoughts, and stay on track as you read through the Gospels with your micro-group.

Daily Rhythm

The Gospel Disciple Life builds on a daily rhythm where you will read one chapter from one of the Gospels using the S.O.W.I.N.G. method by:

Scripture - We read Scripture daily. Each day we read one chapter out of the Gospels as we systematically make our way through all four gospels with our micro-group of three. Since the Holy Spirit is our teacher, we are prayerfully asking God to speak to us through at least one specific verse. Once we have identified this verse, we write it down in our journals.

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Observation - We make observations about that verse. Now that you have a verse, go back through the chapter making observations that bring light to your focused verse. Once again, in your journal, make a list of observations related to your one Scripture. The goal of our observation is to answer the question, "What is Jesus saying to me through the Scripture?"

Walk - We follow Jesus by walking in Truth. The focus of our reading is on following Jesus. When we see Him at work, hear His voice, discern His ways, and obey Him, we are following Him. Identifying our one verse is about seeing, hearing, and understanding Him through His Word that we might follow Him. This leads us to the question, "What is Jesus saying to me through His Word?"

Invite - Invite Jesus into your day. Our goal isn't to be hearers only of the Word, but to be doers of the Word. Once we know what Jesus is saying to us, we are now ready to invite Him into our day. Our goal is to follow Jesus. This leads us to the question, "What are we going to do about it?"

Nurture - Nurture relationships. The Gospel Disciple Life is about doing life-on-life and life-in-community. Who is God calling you to nurture relationships with today?

Good News - Share Good News. We live in a world full of bad news. Our mission is to share the Good News of Jesus. We do this by listening to the stories of others, sharing our story, and sharing God's story. Who is Jesus inviting you to share Good News? What are some practical ways you can share that Good News?

The Gospel Disciple Life Micro-Group Meetings

Consistency is essential in facilitating your meeting if you are going to reproduce it. I would recommend using these six Cs, which are a simple approach to leading micro-groups.

Connect is simply about doing a little life together before you jump into any kind of agenda. It's about taking a few minutes for hang-time.

Celebrate is about taking a moment to celebrate The Gospel Disciple Life. Just completing your assignment is something to celebrate. For many, they have never had a consistent rhythm of reading Scripture or journaling.

Check-in is about holding each other accountable. You may be discussing something that came up in last week's micro-group, or you may use one or two accountability questions like: How did your time go with God last week?

Coach is not the sole responsibility of the facilitator, but the responsibility of the micro-group. The focus is on peer-to-peer learning. The role of the facilitator is to keep things on track. Our primary tool for coaching is asking three strategic questions:

- *What did Jesus say to you last week?*
- *What did you do about it?*
- *How can we pray for you?*

Care by spending time in specific prayer for one another. Make sure everyone has time to share anything they may need prayer for and encourage everyone to pray out loud.

Communicate relevant information about your micro-group. Make sure you schedule your next micro-group time. This is also an excellent time to review the principles of micro-groups. (They are simple enough to reproduce, the Scripture is our only curriculum, the Holy Spirit is our teacher, and following Jesus is our ultimate objective.)

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Micro-Groups Gospel Reading Guide

<p><u>Week 1</u> ___ Day 1 – Mark 1 ___ Day 2 – Mark 2 ___ Day 3 – Mark 3 ___ Day 4 – Mark 4 ___ Day 5 – Mark 5 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>	<p><u>Week 5</u> ___ Day 1 – Matthew 5 ___ Day 2 – Matthew 6 ___ Day 3 – Matthew 7 ___ Day 4 – Matthew 8 ___ Day 5 – Matthew 9 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>
<p><u>Week 2</u> ___ Day 1 – Mark 6 ___ Day 2 – Mark 7 ___ Day 3 – Mark 8 ___ Day 4 – Mark 9 ___ Day 5 – Mark 10 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>	<p><u>Week 6</u> ___ Day 1 – Matthew 10 ___ Day 2 – Matthew 11 ___ Day 3 – Matthew 12 ___ Day 4 – Matthew 13 ___ Day 5 – Matthew 14 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>
<p><u>Week 3</u> ___ Day 1 – Mark 11 ___ Day 2 – Mark 12 ___ Day 3 – Mark 13 ___ Day 4 – Mark 14 ___ Day 5 – Mark 15 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>	<p><u>Week 7</u> ___ Day 1 – Matthew 15 ___ Day 2 – Matthew 16 ___ Day 3 – Matthew 17 ___ Day 4 – Matthew 18 ___ Day 5 – Matthew 19 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>
<p><u>Week 4</u> ___ Day 1 – Mark 16 ___ Day 2 – Matthew 1 ___ Day 3 – Matthew 2 ___ Day 4 – Matthew 3 ___ Day 5 – Matthew 4 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>	<p><u>Week 8</u> ___ Day 1 – Matthew 20 ___ Day 2 – Matthew 21 ___ Day 3 – Matthew 22 ___ Day 4 – Matthew 23 ___ Day 5 – Matthew 24 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>

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<p><u>Week 9</u> ___ Day 1 – Matthew 25 ___ Day 2 – Matthew 26 ___ Day 3 – Matthew 27 ___ Day 4 – Matthew 28 ___ Day 5 – Luke 1 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>	<p><u>Week 13</u> ___ Day 1 – Luke 17 ___ Day 2 – Luke 18 ___ Day 3 – Luke 19 ___ Day 4 – Luke 20 ___ Day 5 – Luke 21 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>
<p><u>Week 10</u> ___ Day 1 – Luke 2 ___ Day 2 – Luke 3 ___ Day 3 – Luke 4 ___ Day 4 – Luke 5 ___ Day 5 – Luke 6 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>	<p><u>Week 14</u> ___ Day 1 – Luke 22 ___ Day 2 – Luke 23 ___ Day 3 – Luke 24 ___ Day 4 – John 1 ___ Day 5 – John 2 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>
<p><u>Week 11</u> ___ Day 1 – Luke 7 ___ Day 2 – Luke 8 ___ Day 3 – Luke 9 ___ Day 4 – Luke 10 ___ Day 5 – Luke 11 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>	<p><u>Week 15</u> ___ Day 1 – John 3 ___ Day 2 – John 4 ___ Day 3 – John 5 ___ Day 4 – John 6 ___ Day 5 – John 7 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>
<p><u>Week 12</u> ___ Day 1 – Luke 12 ___ Day 2 – Luke 13 ___ Day 3 – Luke 14 ___ Day 4 – Luke 15 ___ Day 5 – Luke 16 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>	<p><u>Week 16</u> ___ Day 1 – John 8 ___ Day 2 – John 9 ___ Day 3 – John 10 ___ Day 4 – John 11 ___ Day 5 – John 12 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>

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<p><u>Week 17</u> ___ Day 1 – John 13 ___ Day 2 – John 14 ___ Day 3 – John 15 ___ Day 4 – John 16 ___ Day 5 – John 17 ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>	
<p><u>Week 18</u> ___ Day 1 – John 18 ___ Day 2 – John 19 ___ Day 3 – John 20 ___ Day 4 – John 21 ___ Day 5 – ___ Day 6- Micro-Group</p>	

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Gospel Disciple Journal

Date: _____ Week: _____ Day: _____ Scripture: _____

Scripture: *What Scripture is the Holy Spirit using to teach you something about Jesus?*

Observation: *What am I learning about Jesus?*

Walk: *What is Jesus saying to me?*

Invite: *What am I going to do about it?*

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Need: *What need(s) am I going to meet or relationships am I going to nurture this week?*

Gospel: *With whom am I going to share my story and God's story this week?*

Additional Prayers and thoughts:

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Gospel Disciple Life Weekly Micro Group Time

Readings Covered: _____

Date: _____

Connect:

Celebrate:

Check-in:

Coach:

Communicate:

Care: