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[Discipleship Essential Book by Greg Ogden](#)

# DIG FAQ & Tools

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## **1. What is a DIG (Discipleship Intensive Group)?**

A DIG is a group of 3 to 5 followers of Jesus meeting weekly around the Word of God for accelerated growth in becoming like Christ. It is one part of the overall Discipleship Process based on the model of how Jesus made disciples. It might be helpful to distinguish what a DIG is NOT. A DIG is not LifeGroup nor a support group, it is not an accountability group, it is not a class, it is not a mentoring group, it is not a Bible study group, it is not a recovery group. All of these are important and helpful groups but they are not a DIG and care should be given to keep them focused on the purpose for which they are designed. Will support, accountability, Bible study and some mentoring happen in a DIG? Sure, but that is a by-product not the purpose of the DIG. If you are desiring one of these other groups, we encourage you to pursue one of them and not try to hi-jack the DIG.

## **2. What is the difference between a LifeGroup and a Discipleship Intensive Group?**

A LifeGroup is a bigger group (usually of 8-16 people) that is less intensive and has different foci. While it is a very important part of the Discipleship Process, it is focused on:

- discussing and applying the teaching from God's Word from the previous Sunday (just like how Jesus and the 12 disciples would gather to discuss and apply the teaching he gave to the crowds.)
- helping people get connected to the body of Church of the Open Door
- building relationships of love and community
- supporting and caring for each other in the group
- providing an open chair for assimilating newcomers into the group

## **3. What is the rationale behind a DIG?**

Jesus didn't call us to just be disciples, he called us to make disciples. While Jesus taught the crowds and his 12 disciples wherever he went, Jesus called three of them (Peter, James and John) into an intensive discipleship group where he spent more time with them than the others to nurture "accelerated growth" and development. Because these three men are featured in the Book of Acts, many people have noticed that Peter, James and John grew faster and seemed to grasp more fully the lessons of discipleship Jesus was teaching.

Most Christians today have not been discipled and the DIG provides the perfect platform to either be discipled or to disciple others. Whether it is one person discipling 3 others or whether it is 3-5 gathered to mutually help each other grow, Discipleship Intensive Groups are a core discipling mechanism. The intention is that at the end of the DIG, members from the group multiply and start their own DIG, thereby helping to obey Jesus' command to go make disciples. Again, it is one part of the overall Discipleship Process based on the model of how Jesus made disciples.

## **4. What is the Discipleship Process?**

The adventure of becoming like Christ is mysterious, but not haphazard. By watching Jesus in the Gospels, a clear pattern emerges that he used for discipling. Check out that Discipleship Process [HERE](#)

## **5. What happens in a DIG?**

Growth in discipleship, building significant friendships, growth, discovery, fun, laughter, growth, sharing from our lives and from Scripture, growth, prayer, ministry and growth in becoming more like Jesus.

Each group meeting includes sharing a little of what you're learning from your time with Jesus in the Word each day as recorded in your Disciple Journal. Using the Disciple Journal on a daily basis is extremely helpful in establishing a daily habit of being in the Word of God. Share with the group an insight or two from your daily devotional times in the Journal. Share with them a question you may have had about a word or something in the Scripture. Perhaps you may also

want to briefly share some of the highs and lows of the week. Share what God is doing in your life: What are you hearing from God, and what are you doing about it? What is God teaching you, and how is it affecting your life? Honesty, transparency and openness is essential in growing together in Christ.

Then each group is encouraged to spend some time working through a discipleship curriculum. This is a key part in building a strong foundation as a disciple. Most Christians have never been disciplined and therefore have a very shaky foundation. When the storms of life come, they crash. Each week you will work through a small portion of the curriculum and over the cumulative life of your group meeting together you will emerge with a much stronger foundation for life.

Each meeting should include sharing some prayer requests and praying for each other. This is a part of learning to care for others as well as a step in doing ministry as a lifestyle. From time to time you group will want to go do ministry together: go serve at Salvation Army or a food kitchen, go pray for people in a mall or park, serve at Generation House, We Care We Share, serve a shut in or single parent family, etc. Ask our Missions department if there are any projects in which your group could help. Remember we're not just talking about Jesus, we want to become more like Jesus.

## **6. Where can I get a Disciple Journal?**

Disciple Journals are available for purchase at each of the campuses (and are sold for the cost to produce them.) They come with a 6 month supply of daily devotional pages. At the end of 6 months you can arrange to pick up a refill by calling the church office at 440-323-4644 or by emailing [info@opendoor.tv](mailto:info@opendoor.tv).

## **7. How do I use the Disciple Journal?**

Jesus lived his remarkable life "Connected to God through the Word and Prayer." He said as disciples we are to "abide in the vine," a metaphor for staying connected to God in a life-giving way. The Disciple Journal is designed to help a disciple of Jesus dig into the Word on a daily basis and develop this connected-to-God lifestyle. It provides a structure and a process for that daily time in the Word and Prayer and is meant to be used along with the Daily Devotions produced by Church of the Open Door. Each page consists of space to write out the weekly memory verse, record what Scripture you are reading, a meditation verse for the day and some space to write out some thoughts and insights gleaned from your prayerful reading of God's Word. An Introduction and "How to Use This Journal" section is provided in each Journal.

## **8. How do I get in a DIG?**

You either start one or join one. Either way you should start by praying. Begin by asking God to connect you with other people who have a desire to learn and grow in discipleship. Then start listening for how he will answer and as a part of that listening process talk to your Life Group Leader, Campus Pastor, other church staff or other church leaders who may know someone who might be interested. You are listening to God throughout this process, looking for how he is answering your prayer. It may be that God has put on your heart to be a DIG leader, it could be that he's leading you to grab 3 other people and the four of you do it together. Keep reading some of the other questions and answers on this page to find more help.

### **9. How many people should be in the group?**

Following Jesus' example here makes the most sense. His group was 4: himself and 3 others. The fewer people you have the more you lose the dynamic that comes from multiple people sharing, their insights, their perspective, etc. This is a rich part of the format of the DIG. On the other hand, the more people you have over 4, the less time there is for people to share, the better chance for people to not be involved, and the longer the meetings. 3-5 is the perfect size for a DIG.

### **10. Can we mix male and female members in a DIG?**

The freedom to navigate many of the topics and dynamics that invariably come up in the course of a DIG is severely limited by having both genders present and are addressed much easier in same gender groups. For that reason we ask that only women meet with other women and only men meet with other men in a DIG. If one is wanting the wonderful dynamic that comes with groups consisting of males and females together, there are many other kinds of groups available other than the DIG.

### **11. What kind of people am I looking for to be in my DIG?**

Since this is a discipleship group, the first qualification is that someone must be a believer. (Okay, the first is that they must be breathing.) If someone who is not a believer wants to be in a DIG, it is better to get others who are also not believers and turn it into an Exploring Jesus Group, with more of an evangelistic approach. Once you know they are a believer, the only other qualifications are that they are hungry and committed. Hungry refers to the fact that they are eager to learn, hungry to grow as a disciple and ready to contribute to the success of the group. No one becomes like Christ by themselves; we need each other. Committed means they will make room in their schedule to meet every week, will commit to doing the daily devotions and weekly Discipleship Essentials workbook. Don't say yes to a group or a potential group member if there is not a hunger and a commitment to the group and the process.

### **12. How long does a DIG last?**

This needs to be answered in two different ways. The weekly group meeting should last at least an hour and no more than 90 minutes, depending on how many people are in the group. In terms of how many weeks the group meets, the group should commit to finish the curriculum, which for some groups can be done in 9 months and for others may take a year. These groups are not intended to keep meeting indefinitely, the goal is to reproduce when you are done with the curriculum.

### **13. Where should we meet?**

Any place where you can meet without interruption or distraction. (I would never be able to meet at an Ice Cream store.) Try to find someplace that isn't too far for any one member of the group. There are many good options such as: someone's home, a spare room at work or church, a restaurant, a coffee shop, or a bookstore. If the weather is nice, you may want to meet at a park or picnic shelter. It may be difficult to meet in a grocery store, the local mall, amusement park or animal shelter.

#### **14. How often should we meet?**

Weekly. You can meet more frequently, but it is important that you meet at least once a week. And of course, getting together for other reasons during the week is fine too. There are many other kinds of groups (support groups, Bible Study groups, special interest groups, accountability groups, etc.) where meeting once or twice a month is sufficient or even preferred, but not a discipleship intensive group. The DIG loses its effectiveness when you meet less than once a week and if a person were to miss a week, now a whole month or two goes by without meeting, dramatically affecting in a negative way the purpose of the group. Meeting weekly cannot be urged enough in order for the desired effect of the group to be accomplished. People get sick and we all need vacations, but beyond that make a commitment to be there every week if at all possible.

#### **15. Is there childcare for DIG's?**

I'm sorry, but since DIG's will be meeting at all different times during the week, there is no childcare provided. Each person is encouraged to utilize their own family, friends or babysitter for any childcare necessary.

#### **16. What if I am in a group and don't like it?**

The first couple of weeks is a "test-drive" period for the DIG where group members are encouraged to "test" to see if this is a commitment they are willing to make. Once made, group members are encouraged to keep their commitment. Of course, there are always extenuating circumstances that groups are encouraged to navigate with wisdom and compassion.

#### **17. What kinds of resources do you have to offer?**

Disciple Journals are available for purchase at each of the campuses (and are sold for the cost to produce them.) They come with a 6 month supply of daily devotional pages. At the end of 6 months you can arrange to pick up a refill by calling the church office at 440-323-4644 or by emailing [info@opendoor.tv](mailto:info@opendoor.tv).

We recommend several resources for a discipleship curriculum:

Discipleship Essentials by Greg Ogden This is the best combination of a curriculum that provides a solid but simple biblical foundation that is also very easy to use. Specifically designed to be used by groups of 3-5.

Multiply by Francis Chan A helpful tool designed to be used for one-on-one discipleship. Not as user friendly as Ogden.

Discipleship Journeys with Jesus by Mark Allen Walker This is an online tool that leads you through multiple spiritual disciplines and is strong on skills but weak on theological foundation.

#### **18. Is there a financial cost to be in a DIG?**

There is no cost to join the group, but there is cost involved in purchasing materials.

#### **19. What are the expectations of DIG members?**

We have found that it is best to set the expectations clearly up front for the best experience of everyone involved. Discipleship is not a solo sport and like any team, there are expectations of members. These expectations are outlined in a DIG covenant:

In order to grow as a disciple of Christ, I agree to keep the following covenant. I will:

1. Live Surrendered; offer myself to God
2. Be open, honest and confidential
3. Complete all assignments
4. Meet weekly to discuss assignments
5. Be encouraging and helpful in meeting; pray for each other outside of meeting
6. Be praying about who I could disciple when done

Group members should sign their DIG Covenant by the 3rd week, thus giving them a chance to test drive the group before making their decision to commit to the group.

Some people may decide after the initial meeting they can't make the commitment. That's okay. Remember, you are looking for people who are hungry and committed, people who have a desire to grow and learn. An unwillingness to commit reveals that they are not ready to be in a DIG. It's better for them to see that ahead of time rather than break up the dynamic of the group several months in.

## **20. How do I lead a DIG?**

Leading a DIG is very easy since it is facilitating, not teaching, and since it is made up of people who really want to be there. Furthermore, if one uses the Discipleship Essentials book (by Greg Ogden, referred to in FAQ #17 above), there is a very helpful 12 page Leader's Guide at the end of the book including detailed steps for the early sessions to help one get started and four different suggested formats to choose from to adapt to your own style and preferences as a leader. Feel free to contact your campus pastor for any further help or to answer any questions you may have regarding leading a DIG. Many people claim they are not qualified to lead a group, but it might be helpful to see yourself not as the "teacher" nor the person with all the answers, but merely facilitating a discussion with a few friends. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you and you will grow as you step out and lead.

Each DIG leader is required to pass on the leadership/facilitation of the group to other group members after 3 months. By switching who leads the weekly DIG meeting every 3 months, it becomes built-in leadership training. You just take turns leading every 3 months with the person with the most experience leading groups, going first.