



Core Discipleship

Leader's Guide Launching A Core Discipleship Group

**“One standing alone can be attacked and defeated,
but two can stand back-to-back and conquer;
three is even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken”
(Ecclesiastes 4:12)**

CORE Discipleship is a faith-based, Christian organization. Our mission is to help you make disciples of Jesus. We provide a simple and reproducible discipleship process based on Jesus' "inner circle" or "core" comprised of Peter, James, and John. We also provide discipleship training and free discipleship resources as free downloadable eBooks.

Just like you, Father God is using the many events and circumstances of life's journey to mold and shape me into the person He desires. Occasionally, I've cooperated completely. It's in those rare moments when something extraordinary takes place - Heaven touches earth, mountains are moved, a part of me is transformed.

Through His infinite patience and unfathomable love I am learning to become the man He created me to be. As I daily surrender my life to Him through His precious Holy Spirit, I see more clearly life eternal.

My hope and prayer for you are that you too will discover God's purpose and become exactly what He has planned for you all along - His son or daughter.

May God grant that we become His disciples by His grace,

Doug Morrell

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Doug is a seasoned discipler and small group leader. Since graduating from Texas Tech University in 1984, he's worked in a dual capacity -- working within for-profit businesses around the country while also serving the church in various pastoral roles. Additionally, he and his wife Suzie are the founders/directors of CORE Discipleship, a ministry dedicated to making disciples who make disciples. Doug and Suzie have three children: Katheryn, Hannah, and Nathaniel.

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Introduction

This Guide presents the 3-Strand Core Discipleship process in general and more specifically, the third strand in this process we call Core discipleship.

This guide may help you see discipleship in a whole new light. Relax and enter God's Kingdom rest as you prepare to not only begin the process of intentional, relational, horizontal and vertical discipleship, but as you become part of something exciting, fresh and wonderfully bold.

Doug & Suzie Morrell

Founders/Directors Core Discipleship Ministry

Testimonials

“The “three-strand” church is a world-changing church. While there has been volumes of books written on corporate worship and small group ministry, comparatively very little has been put in print regarding Core Groups. Doug Morrell fills in the gap with the Core Group Workbook. It is a “hands on” book that will allow the third missing strand of the church to gain much needed momentum. Use this book as a field guide, not a theology textbook. Commit yourself to be a doer of the word and never look back. Make way for the “three-strand” church!”

Dr. Phillip Hearn

Founder & Former Senior Pastor, New River Fellowship

“The Core process beautifully balances the Great Commandment - love God, with the Great Commission by involving people in evangelism and discipleship as a part of their training. Core becomes an on-the-job training process so that people learn how to do the work of ministry and participate in the accomplishment of the Great Commandment objectives. Doug understands the intricate process of how to get people to study Scripture for themselves, so that the Holy Spirit brings conviction that makes disciples eager to make application to the Biblical principles that transform their lives into the likeness and image of Jesus. The Core Discipleship plan is a process that produces Biblical disciples. I highly recommend it to you. It is the straw you've been searching for. Grab it!”

Dave Dawson

Founder and Executive Director, Equipping The Saints Ministry

“I highly recommend this resource for those who are looking for a “no-nonsense” tool that will help them fulfill the Master's plan for discipleship.”

Dr. Gary B. Zustiak

Former Director of Youth Ministries and Resources, Christ In Youth

Purpose

This guide provides a broad overview of the Core Discipleship process and the Core Discipleship workbook. The workbook is a very practical and useful resource that serves as a 1-year curriculum containing the basic essential elements needed to help mature believers into obedient, loving and fruitful disciples. The Core training workbook is based upon a 3-Strand Church Discipleship Process (Ecc. 4:12). The first strand of a healthy church is a dynamic corporate worship gathering based on fellowship, worship, discipleship, ministry and evangelism. The second strand is made up of various small groups flowing out of the church. The third strand is made up of Core discipleship groups where the discipleship process is accelerated through close, safe, confidential relationships and is able to multiply itself through many spiritual generations. Core Groups go beyond small groups and accountability groups in that they are more than a social gathering or a cursory overview of a devotional book or reading. Core Groups are designed with growth, mutual accountability, outreach, and spiritual maturity as each member's goals.

“One standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer; three is even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

A Paradigm Shift Is Needed

According to Barna Research and other organizations, the church is permanently losing between 75 and 94 percent of its children by their second year of college. Only 9 percent of all born-again Christians have a biblical world view. What this means is that your child and their friends have less than a 10 percent chance of having a biblical world view in the future. Even more shocking is the recent finding that less than .5% of young adults age 18 to 23 have a biblical world view -- that is less than one in two hundred young adults. In other words one adult child from every one hundred families has a biblical world view.

Assuming that only 75 percent of all youth are leaving, this translates into more than 2 million children in America each year who are permanently leaving the church and over 40 million lost in the last two decades. If we do nothing to address this situation, by the year 2050 we will lose another 113 million children.

Regarding adult converts, there has been discussion for decades about the "revolving door" in the church. Many churches have reached a plateau of membership, and many are actually declining.

We believe that we are seeing these results because we are not following Jesus' process for making disciples.

- Jesus modeled His discipleship process
- Jesus spent time with His disciples (based on just an 8-hour day over 3 years would equal 8,760 hours of discipleship training invested in His disciples)
- Jesus used a show, tell, release and supervise discipleship model where Scripture was not just academic (hearing), but vocational (doing)
- Jesus sent them out in groups and within those groups there were more mature believers with younger believers

The cost of discipleship is great; the cost of not discipling is greater.

The Benefits of Making Disciples As Jesus Did

- Obedience to His Great Commission -- you will be able to honestly say, "Yes, I am being disciplined and I am making disciples as Jesus both commanded and demonstrated."
- Will make you and those you disciple more like Jesus.
- Will grow you in the faith more than anything you have ever done.
- Will develop something in the lives of those you disciple that otherwise would never take place.
- Will create deep, lifelong relationships with those you disciple.
- Will bring God's Word to the forefront of your life and ministry.
- Will equip you and those you disciple to live for Christ.
- Will produce godly fruit.
- Will produce an eternal impact for God's Kingdom.

Biblical Evidence for 3-Strand Discipleship

Scripture paints a clear picture of a God who not only lives in community but embraces and seeks after it. First, with Adam (Gen.1:26), then with the people of Israel (Deut.6:4) and finally in the Godhead itself (John 1:1-3). There is power in a cord of three and this concept runs throughout God's Word. Since God Himself lives and works in community, and you are made in the likeness of God, then you too are created to live in and for community. To be human is to hunger for community.

Additionally, Jesus and the disciples modeled a closely knit community. Christ Himself came to provide community and live with us (Mth.1:23) and then He called a small group of disciples to live and walk with Him (Mark 3:7-10,13-14). Jesus knew that the multitudes had great needs, but chose to minister to the twelve and especially the three (Peter, James and John). By walking with and training a few, He ultimately transformed many lives.

This cord of three strands - community - is Christ's highest dream for His Church. It is seen in His prayer for us that we may be one as He and the Father and Holy Spirit are one (John 17:11). Additionally, Christ sees our unity and community as our message to the world that He came and that He is love, and if we, the Church, fail at community, we fail our mission (John 17:21, 23).

Moses

God gave Moses a divine process with which to effectively lead millions of people. Just as Moses realized, the church can become too large and impersonal for any one person to oversee. However, just as God gave Moses a process, He has given us a divine plan to enable us to effectively disciple His sons and daughters. God has a structure by which He governs the Church.

"The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?" Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and laws." Moses' father-in-law replied, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to

you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people's representative before God and bring their disputes to him. Teach them the decrees and laws, and show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform. But select capable men from all the people--men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain--and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied." Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves." (Ex. 18:13-26)

From the Old Testament

Moses selected people with the following four qualifications:

- 1. Available:** God is not looking for ability; He is looking for availability. He desires people who will draw from His ability, becoming able ministers of the new covenant (2 Cor. 3:5-6).
- 2. Fear God:** People who respect and revere God and do not take lightly the things of God. They must count the cost of serving God and be aware of the consequences of their deeds.
- 3. Honest:** People of integrity - they speak the truth in love. This also means that they must be men and women of the Word. Fellowship is based upon the truth. They must be true to their word.
- 4. Hate Covetousness:** A dangerous person is one who covets somebody else's position. The grace of God will keep you where He leads you, but God has no obligation to keep you where He has not led you. Wait on the Lord. If you have a calling on your life, God will promote you in His timing as you demonstrate faithfulness in small things (Pro. 18:16; 2 Tim. 2:2).

From the New Testament:

- 1. Obedient to God's Word:** Jesus said, *"If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciple"* (John 8:31).
- 2. Loving:** Jesus said, *"By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another"* (John 13:35).
- 3. Fruitful:** Jesus said, *"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciple"* (John 15:8).
- 4. Faithful:** Paul said, *"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others"* (2 Timothy 2:2).

Jesus delegated; when He ascended He gave gifts to the Church (some call this the fivefold ministry). It is the responsibility of this instructional team to equip the saints so that they can do

the work of the ministry. As a result, the body of Christ is built up and edified.

“This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be disciplers and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” (Eph. 4:8-16)

Isaiah 9:6-7 clearly shows that God has a government and Jesus is King of a kingdom. The government will rest on the shoulders of Jesus and He has delegated His authority (Mth. 28:18-20). We must respect the office that God has established people in.

Find out where God wants you, where you belong. Commit to your local church. There is protection in the church, but dangers outside. Some people do not commit to a local church, because they are afraid they will be exposed (unmasked). Agape love is all about unconditional love and commitment.

Let us cause the body of Christ to be edified in love and to grow, as we, the individual members, do our share. Because we are part of God’s Church, each one of us is very important. You are making a great and valuable contribution to the growth and effectiveness of your local church. You are playing a significant role in the kingdom of God. Jesus’ vision for discipleship will be accomplished as you commit yourself to making disciple’s according to the Master’s plan for discipleship.

Relational Evidence for 3-Strand Discipleship

There is relational evidence that God created you to crave relationships and community:

- God wants you to seek a relationship with Him (Acts 17:24-27)
- God wants you to have relationships with others (Genesis 2:18)
- God reveals His emotions to you (Ephesians 4:30; Zephaniah 3:17)
- God intervenes when you can’t communicate (Romans 8:26-27)

There is also blessing that comes from community:

- Strength for storms of life (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)
- Wisdom for making good decisions (Proverbs 15:22)
- Confidentiality and accountability for spiritual health (Proverbs 27:17)
- There is strength, reliability and assurance in community (Proverbs 18:24)

Structural Evidence for 3-Strand Discipleship

As churches are planted to accomplish God’s work in the world, organization becomes a necessity to ensure community. Core groups are a way to ensure that this is done in a life-giving

manner by “doing life together” - everyone is cared for and no one cares for too many (not more than four). Just as is true in a natural family, Core Groups enhance spiritual parenting to ensure that no one stands alone, struggles alone, serves alone, develops alone, seeks alone, or grows up alone.

Core groups are a God ordained way to provide infrastructure to assure the development of disciples (Matthew 28:19, 20), the work load is shared (Exodus 18:9-22), everyone receives care (Acts 6:1) and that leadership is provided (Titus 1:5).

Finally, Core groups provide a structure for “mutual membership” to promote unity in the body (Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16), a sense of belonging to one another (Romans 7:2-4) and a place to edify, bless, grow, serve and challenge each other through the exercise of each person’s spiritual gifts (I Corinthians 12:12-27).

3-Strand Core Discipleship Overview

Jesus' 3-strand discipleship: Crowd, Cell, and Core

The most effective manner to train and equip people for any skill is by providing effective models and opportunities to practice the skill itself. Jesus used a show, tell, release, and supervise discipleship training process. Jesus ministered to the multitudes (crowd), the 12 (cell), and the inner circle of 3 (Core). After calling the disciples, He took them along with Him, teaching and healing the sick as He went. Then, after He thought they had seen and learned enough to try for themselves, He commissioned, empowered, instructed, and sent them out to do the same things in small groups. This discipleship process should be no different for those desiring to bring others into a complete understanding and walk in Christ-likeness.

Wesley's 3-strand discipleship: Crowd, Cell, and Core

In 1743 John Wesley organized a society. "Such a society is no other than a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their own salvation." Discipline was the key to this level of holy living. Wesley created a 3-strand church discipleship process he called Societies, Classes, and Bands. We call this the 3-Strand Church Discipleship Model - Crowd, Cell and Core.

The 3-Strand Church Model: The Master's Plan For Discipleship			
Jesus' Model	Multitudes	The 12	The 3 (Peter, James, John)
Wesley's Model	Societies	Classes	Bands
3-Strand Model	Crowd	Cells	CORE
Group Size	50+	5-16	3-4
Focus	Celebration	Community	Commitment
Population	Mixed gender	Mostly mixed gender	Gender specific
Message Content	General	Less general	Discipleship specific

Strand I: Crowd

Size: 50 + people; typically Sunday or weekend service(s); large gathering of people for corporate worship

Purpose: To bring about a change in knowledge

Focus: Celebration - worship

Wesley's society or crowd group included those in a geographical area, much like a typical, congregational meeting in today's church. These large groups of people met once a week to pray, sing, study scripture, and to watch over one another in love. However, as is true of today's corporate church gathering, there was little or no provision made at this level for personal response or feedback.

Strand 2: Cell

Size: 5-16 people

Purpose: To bring about behavioral change; conduct

Focus: Community - fellowship

Wesley's class or cell group was the most basic group structure of the society. The class was composed of 12-20 members, both sexes, mixed by age, social standing and spiritual readiness, under the direction of a trained leader. It was not a gathering for academic learning. They met weekly in the evening for mutual confession of sin and accountability for growing in holiness. This group provided the structure to more closely inspect the condition of the flock, to help them through trials and temptations, and to bring further understanding in practical terms to the messages they had heard preached in the public society meeting. Membership in a class meeting was non-negotiable. If you wanted to continue in the society you had to be in a class. In 1742 in one society in London there were 426 members, divided into 65 classes. Eighteen months later that same society had 2200 members, all of whom were in classes. Every week each class member was expected to speak openly and honestly on the true state of his or her soul. This strand closely resembles today's cell group, small group, life group, etc.

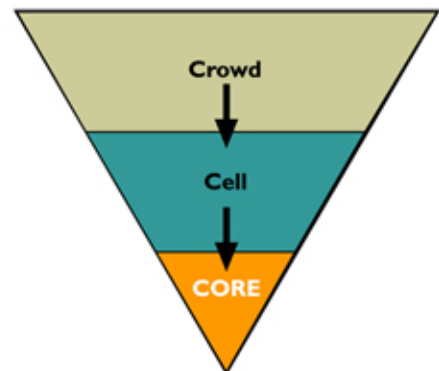
Strand 3: Core

Size: 3 or 4 people

Purpose: To bring about a change of direction, heart and position; knowledge, character and conduct

Focus: Commitment - discipleship

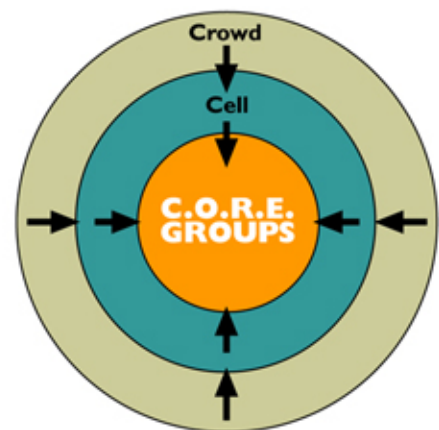
Wesley's band or "Core" was made up of 4 members, all the same sex, age, and marital status. This was a voluntary group of people who professed a clear Christian commitment, who desired to grow in love, holiness, and purity of motive. The environment was one of ruthless honesty and frank openness. There were specific rules about punctuality and order within the meeting. He introduced accountability questions which everyone answered openly and honestly in the meeting each week. Bands became the training ground for future leaders. This group held to extreme confidentiality in a "safe place", mutual submission where matters of indifference were yielded to the released leader, and godly stewardship. This was the group that could intensively pursue goals and vision together. There is a strong case to be made for churches to review, adapt and integrate a 3-Strand Discipleship Process into their expression. It begins with the Bible, is supported by sociological evidence, makes sense from an organizational standpoint, and has been proven successful for thousands of years.



Crowd: Sunday large group worship; 50+ people; celebration centered; mostly mixed gender

Cell: Weekly small group meetings; 5-16 people; fellowship centered; mixed gender

CORE: 3 or 4 meeting weekly; gender specific; discipleship specific



Three Strands Within the Great Commission

From Matthew 28:19-20 we learn:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

The Great Commission has three participles: “go”, “baptizing” and “teaching” and one imperative verb, a command: “make disciples.” The main idea is to make disciples. The participles tell us how to do that: we make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching. So the goal of a Core Discipleship Group is to make disciples, teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded.

The First Strand of the Great Commission - Go

The first strand of the Great Commission and Core disciple-making is to “go” out into the world to represent Christ to a lost and dying world. Where you are is where you witness - that is your world. A disciple becomes a living epistle.

The Second Strand of the Great Commission - Baptize

The second strand of the Great Commission and Core disciple-making is to baptize new believers “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The Greek word to “baptize” (baptizo) literally means to immerse, something we are familiar with; however, throughout the New Testament this term means, “to identify with someone or something.” This means that by placing faith in Christ we are identified with Him - identified with His death on the cross, and identified through His resurrection into newness of life.



When Jesus told all believers in the church age to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, He was commanding us to teach all those who become disciples that we are to think like Christ, our behavior is to be Christ-like. We are to have the same mind as Christ Jesus.

The Third Strand of the Great Commission - Teach

The third strand of Jesus’ Commission and Core disciple-making is for us to, “Teach them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). Jesus taught His disciples how to live, and that is what He commands us to teach others how to live, too.

The teaching that Jesus was talking about when He said teach them “to observe all that I commanded you” should change people’s lives. A transformed life is when a disciple has surrendered their life to Christ.

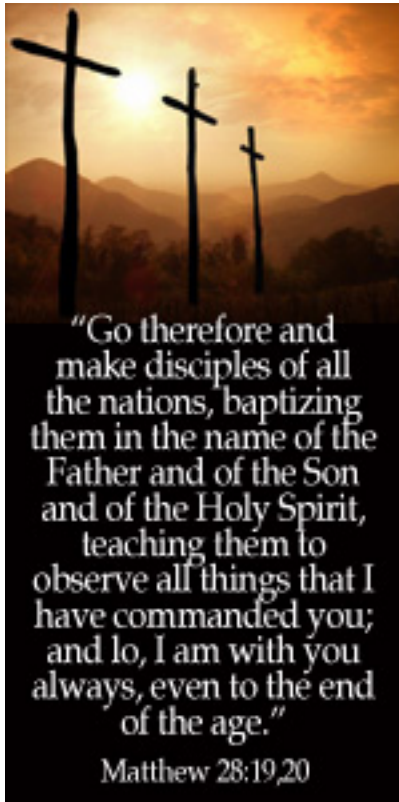
The Promise

The last phrase of Matthew 28:20 is an incredible promise: “And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” In context, this verse is primarily talking about making disciples. What Jesus is saying is that when we make disciples He will be with us.

When God sees a disciple making church, He gets involved there. When He sees disciples going out to make new disciples, then baptizing and teaching them, He is very present. According to Romans 8:29, God wants disciples to be conformed to Christ's image, and according to His Commission, He promises to help us make disciples to accomplish His plan.

What is a disciple?

A disciple is a born-again believer who has decided that following Christ takes priority over everything else in life. Jesus didn't say being a disciple would be easy. He told His followers that they would have to deny themselves and take up their own crosses to follow Him. He emphasized the fact that He would have to be first in their lives when He said, ***"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple"*** (Luke 14:26). Jesus is speaking to you and to me. Being a disciple and making disciples is a direct command from our Lord Jesus and the responsibility of every born-again believer.



We are to commit our lives to Jesus Christ and be willing to do whatever Jesus tells us so that His kingdom will be built according to His plan. That's discipleship.

Did everyone who heard Jesus preach become His disciple? No. Whenever Jesus drew a large crowd to hear Him teach many departed because He told them about denying themselves, carrying their crosses, and putting Him first in their lives (John 6:66,67). There is no middle ground with Jesus.

Core Discipleship Groups follow the Master's plan for discipleship by imparting life, not just teaching about life - it is spiritual parenting. It is showing, telling, supervising and releasing disciples to make disciples who can then repeat the process once more. It is both an adventure of a lifetime and a lifetime of adventure.

Core Discipleship Groups

Core purposes to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission by focusing on the third-strand of the Great Commission: "Teach them to observe all that I commanded you" (Mth. 28:20). We accomplish this purpose as we build lifelong relationships in the context of safe and confidential Core Groups - groups of no more than four disciples, men with men and women with women. Core Groups are not accountability groups or smaller, small groups. Under the supervision of a local church, Core Groups develop students and adults who commit their lives to Jesus Christ and are willing to follow Him as presented in the pages of God's Word. From the very beginning, Core members are held accountable to begin praying for two to come to Christ and for someone they are called to disciple. The "handshake" of Core is fivefold:

I. Love

The first foundational value of a Core Group is the pursuit of the Great Commandment - our

vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationship with others (Mth. 22:37-40).

2. Christ-likeness

The second foundational value is the pursuit of Christ-likeness as we observe the Great Commission (Mth. 28:19,20). It is our desire to be genuinely conformed to the character of Jesus. We believe God's vision for man is to make us in the image of Christ (Gen. 1:26; Rom. 8:29). We believe that all spiritual progress is the result of God's grace. We believe that humility is the pathway to Christ-likeness. In seeking to truly become like Christ, we remember His command to, ***“Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Mth. 11:29).***

3. Devoted

The third foundational value of Core is a commitment to the four fundamental devotions of the church as recorded in Acts 2:42: devoted to God's Word, fellowship, communion, and prayer. It is learning to be a doer of the Word.

4. Equipped

A Core Group outfits the saints for the work of ministry - the privilege and enterprise of each member of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16).

5. Faithful

A Core Group follows Jesus' pattern for discipleship and which Paul presented in 2 Timothy 2:2: ***“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”***

The Purpose of a Core Group

1. To provide for close interpersonal fellowship and interaction between disciples so that committed relationships can be developed - to know Him and make Him known!
2. To promote unity and bonding as a family, providing a place where disciples can feel that they are a part of the body of Christ.
3. To help meet the needs of believers on every level, i.e. spiritual, social, intellectual, and physical. This involves praying and caring for each other, sharing with each other and ministering to one another.
4. To provide pastoral care so that they can receive special personal attention, encouragement, instruction, edification, exhortation, admonishing, etc.
5. To disciple disciples to a point where they will in turn be able to disciple others. This involves teaching the basic truths and principles of the Word of God and maintaining accountability.
6. To create a safe, relaxed, spiritual environment for disciples to grow in God and His Word without fear of rejection or condemnation.
7. To encourage disciples to become doers of the Word and be used of the Lord so that they may be a blessing and testimony to the local church.
8. To provide an opportunity for individual expression in worship and ministry.
9. To be a tool of evangelism in your local neighborhood; reaching out to people on a continual basis in order to lead them to Jesus.
10. To provide a line of communication - networking all levels of leadership together.

Core Group Goals & Objectives

1. Growth: each Core Group should consist of 3 to 4 people, gender specific. The Core Group instructor (CI) should begin training each disciple (2 Tim. 2:2) to launch a new Core Group (birthed from the present Core Group) when the CI sees that they are ready. Be sensitive in recognizing leadership qualities. Every CI must have a vision for multiplication (Acts 6:7; 12:24) and commitment to growth.

2. Evangelism: a number of polls and surveys show that approximately 80% of people being saved are led into salvation by either friends, family, neighbors or business associates. Relatively few are saved in church services. In most instances, it is easier to evangelize from your home or a neutral place like a restaurant than it is to get folks into a Sunday service. Use your Core Group as a place for evangelism. Challenge each member to be actively engaged in reaching out to their neighbors and community.

3. True Discipling: the CI's responsibility of protecting, feeding, and guiding the Core Group is outworked in the Core group setting. A shepherd calls his sheep by name (John 10:3). It is impossible for any one man, or even a handful of men, to effectively disciple a congregation of any significant size. The discipling of God's people can only be outworked as the Lord raises up disciple-makers. Though responsibilities and spiritual authority vary, each is only in active relationship with a smaller group of 2 to 3 disciples. Once Core Group leaders begin building intimate relationships, needs are met, gifts stirred, potential developed, and the process of helping disciples find their place in the body will be well underway.

4. Discipleship: true biblical discipleship flows out of healthy relationships. As God's people begin to interact with each other and with more spiritually mature believers, vision and anointing is imparted. Paul personally stirred the gifts in Timothy. What every disciple needs is to have more spiritually mature believers around them for encouragement, correction and support. Likewise, each of us needs to be able to give, share and encourage those younger than us in the Lord. Paul's command to Timothy was to seek out faithful men and to teach them what he, himself, was taught (2 Tim. 2:2). God makes them able.

5. Equipping The Saints For The Ministry: Ephesians 4:11 tells us that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers were given to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. What better place to begin to work out callings and giftings in the Lord than in a Core Group setting? Core Groups provide a safe, confidential, and forgiving environment where believers can begin to step out in spiritual giftings, learn inter-relational skills and to minister to others.



Ten Characteristics of a Core Group

1. A close family - it is a band of brothers or sisters for life.
2. Personal application of the Bible to daily life.
3. Sharing of individual life testimony.
4. Effective disciple care.

5. Encouragement and edification.
6. Unlimited opportunities for meaningful service.
7. Friendship evangelism.
8. Discipling of new converts.
9. Spiritual growth.
10. Development of strong, future leadership.

Keys To Successful Core Discipleship

1. Love: In every situation let love lead and guide you and you will always come out victorious. Remember to consciously share love with others. You must make a decision to love every person.

2. Enthusiasm: Be excited about the privilege you have of being in or leading a Core. Your enthusiasm will rub off and spread through the group. Don't let worry, discouragement, or depression creep into your Core Group meeting.

3. Faithfulness: Be consistent so people are able to follow Christ in you. Jesus said if we will be faithful in the little, He will make us rulers over much. Be dedicated to people and this ministry.

4. Testimony: Share what Jesus means to you personally. Your story of salvation has a great impact on others. Don't be afraid to share your personal, living testimony and let people know what you have experienced. The good and the not so good.

5. Spirit Led: Let the Holy Spirit be your guide. He will help you and enable you to deal with every circumstance. Trust the Holy Spirit in you and He will bring things to your mind that will meet the needs of your group.

6. One Accord: A good teacher is also a good student. It is important to stay in harmony with your local church leaders, not allowing strife to enter your heart or your meetings. Don't depart from the purpose/vision/goals/objectives established by the church. This creates unnecessary strife and ultimately, division. Remember, anything that causes disunity is sin according to the Bible. You are placed into authority because you are under authority.

7. Boldness: To be bold is to be free, frank, open, fearless and confident. God desires you to speak the Word boldly and let people know you believe what you are saying and doing.

Meditate on these things. Give yourself wholly to them and see where you are weak and strong.

How to Start Your Core Discipleship Group

1. Pray. Take a few weeks and prayerfully consider 2 or 3 others who have your heart and a heart for evangelism/discipleship. Only then go to the next step.

2. Invite. Personally approach each person. You might ask something like, "The Lord has



placed you on my heart. Would you be willing to join me and one or two others on a weekly discipleship journey so that we can become better disciples of Jesus?”

3. Communicate. If you are using resources from Core Discipleship, give them an overview of the process and how the material will be used. NOTE: a sample covenant is available for your use in this overview.

4. Expectations. Disciples need a clear sense of what is expected of them. Walk through the Core Discipleship covenant line-by-line and have them restate the requirements in their own words. Mention that your Core Group will be meeting weekly for an initial period of 9-weeks at which time the group will evaluate and if in agreement, will continue for a total time together of a year. NOTE: a sample covenant is available for your use in this overview.

5. Count The Cost. Ask each disciple to prayerfully consider the invitation. Specifically, ask them to not respond immediately, but to really examine whether they have the time and the heart for the journey. Let them know that others will be in the Core Group, too.

6. Time & Place. Set the first regular time together and get started. Quiet places are best to develop transparency and intimacy. At the first gathering, ask each person why he or she decided to commit to the Core Discipleship Group.

7. Guide & Facilitate. Take your time and move at a comfortable pace. Encourage questions. Address personal matters. Life will happen while you are together. The Core resources are only tools, not something to check off your “to-do-list”. Remember, discipling cannot be forced through a curriculum. Discipling relationships require an individualized approach that takes into account the unique growth of those involved. The goal is Christ-likeness, not to complete the curriculum. It’s all about loving God and each other.

8. Keys For Growth. The group will only go as deep as your willingness to be vulnerable, honest, and transparent. Intimacy, accountability and transparency are paramount.

9. Multiplication. The commitment to disciple others is in the Core Discipleship covenant and should remain the focus. Each Core Group member should be allowed to lead the process. They will learn by hearing, seeing and doing.

When preparing to launch a Core Discipleship Group in your Church, selecting the right people to participate is of the utmost importance. We recommend that Core members be members of your local church. One purpose of Core is to build a team within your church. As a result, unity, accountability and submission to godly, ordained authority are absolutely essential. We strongly encourage you to keep this in mind as you consider the qualities to look for in a good Core candidate.

Tools You’ll Need

Core Groups travel light! All you’ll need is a willing-



ness to learn and to launch out, your Bible, a Core workbook for each person (or other materials approved by your church leadership), something to write with, an optional one-year daily devotional such as Oswald Chambers' "Utmost For His Highest" and a willingness to be led by and obedience to the Holy Spirit.

Group meetings weeks 1-6 are purposely designed to build relationships; a "safe place" in the lives of those you are discipling, to present a more detailed understanding of each of the topics, and build a close interpersonal network.

Additional Core Group Gathering Guidelines

1. 60-90 minutes per meeting time once each week is very realistic and does not place a burden on those in your group. Start on time and end on time.

2. Start with a small number of people, and don't expand by adding additional members. Each Core member should be committed to being on time and being there as regularly as possible. Visitors should be welcomed to come and observe and participate, but they should not remain. Core Groups are made up of at least three and no more than four people; more than that and you've launched a small group and the dynamics of the Core will be quickly lost.

3. From the start make sure that everyone understands that "no one is in charge." In other words, you're gathering together as brothers or sisters - equals - under the Lordship of Jesus Christ under the direction of His Holy Spirit. You come expecting Jesus through His Holy Spirit to guide you, teach you, speak to you - through His Word and one another. Jesus said,

"You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. Whoever would be great among you must become your servant and whoever would be first among you must become your slave, just as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."
(Mth. 20:25-28)

Jesus tells us that true greatness comes in serving others. Be humble enough to admit that you can learn from one other.

Most businesses, organizations, and institutions measure greatness by personal achievement; the more you succeed - the more people you climb over to reach the top of the ladder - the more successful you are viewed. In Christ's kingdom, however, it's just the opposite; service is the way to get ahead. The desire to be on top will hinder, not help. Rather than seeking to have your needs met, look for ways that you can minister to the needs of others. Core Groups are led by the Holy Spirit. Obviously there is one person who is the Core instructor/facilitator.



tor/discipler, but it is someone who knows that they are on the same journey as everyone else, but just a little further down the path than those in the group. It cannot be emphasized enough that, "Where two or more are gathered together in my name, there I [Jesus] am in the midst of you." That's the power of Core Groups.

Additionally, make it known from the beginning that the purpose of the Core Group is to fulfill the Great Commandment through the Great Commission. In other words, challenge each member to begin praying for two unbelievers and one other person that they can begin discipling, using the same process and materials. Pattern your Core Group after Jesus' model of discipleship, "show, tell, release, supervise". In time, each member of your Core Group should be released to launch their own Core Group and so on. It's amazing what happens when you follow the Master's plan for discipleship.

4. You'll want to devote about half of your typical time together to God's Word. Over time, you'll want to allow the other group members the responsibility of leading the group. As the Core Group Instructor, you'll want to critique their study and encourage those who clearly have teaching gifts. Every Christian receives something uniquely their own, and this needs to be shared for the edification and encouragement of all the other members.

5. Be sure to allow adequate time for sharing in your group, and for prayer. Don't allow the prayer time to be shortened to the last five minutes. Start your time together in prayer. It's a good idea to stop and pray for members as they share. Sometimes, a given member may have little to report, on other occasions the concerns of one member may take up the entire discussion and prayer time. Watch the overall balance and treat the weekly meeting as very important. Give the time together a very high priority. Members need to learn to listen and tune in to the others as well as sharing and giving. If the Holy Spirit is leading a Core Group, no one person will ever end up dominating the time together.

- Begin in prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your time together.
- Review the previous week's study/application and any practical changes. Use the journal pages in the Workbook and record the date, who is present, a brief summary of what was talked about and any notable changes, prayer requests, concerns, and make notation of any "next steps" that might have arisen in your time together. Review the previous week's notes prior to your next Core meeting. This has been a great tool and I highly recommend it.
- Read out loud the assigned Bible chapter (have each person read a portion). There are times when you might want to divide the chapter in two portions. Be Spirit led!
- Ask the group to comment on key points. This makes for a lively time together because each person is in a unique life-stage and the Word will speak to them on a personal level.
- Ask specific questions (use the What, Why, How, When, Where format):

"What is the single most important Kingdom of God principle found in what we've read?"

“Why is this principle important?”

“How does this principle impact you?”

“When are you to apply this principle?”

“Where are you to apply this principle?”



6. Take steps of faith and risk being open and vulnerable. Those in your Core Group will become lifelong friends. Just as is true in natural parenting, the members of your Core Group will become a lot like family. I have people whom I've disciplined, released, and are now making disciples and who, from time-to-time, call me with questions about major issues they're facing. We're very connected and I know our relationship will always remain intact. In fact, one of the men I instructed said to me recently, “Our lives are so intertwined that we can go for months and not have any conversation, but pick up right where we left off, and not miss a thing!” We're very connected. Schedule some group social times such as a basketball, BBQs, half-day or all-day retreats at the beach or in the mountains, special social times with wives and girlfriends and visitors, etc.

7. Every Christian has one or more different spiritual gifts. Try to help one another discover their gifts and help them learn to use their gifts more effectively. As the Core Group deepens in Spirit, individuality will blossom and the effectiveness of the members in the world will be noticeably increased. Love for one another and a great sense of joy and expectation will highlight your time together. In fact, though your dedicated Group times are precious, you will actually spend more time together outside the Core Group than within!



8. Develop some outreach projects together. Repair a house for someone. Do a landscape project for someone who can't. Go clean someone's home. Go to Mexico and help build an orphanage. Team up in witnessing efforts. Do life together.

9. Encourage each member to write out and share his or her own personal testimony of faith in Jesus with the Group (Lesson 17). Each time the Group meets, he or she is encouraged to share current needs and struggles as well.

10. Release. Just as is true in natural parenting, there comes a time when parents know that their children are ready to move out and become independent of them and dependent upon

God (independently dependent). Help them get established. Again, just as is true in natural parenting, those released are now your “friends” in Christ; though they will always look to you for prayerful counsel and consideration, they must be allowed to move out and on in their faith walk, too. Note: Those you release will now be coached by you. It’s a good idea to meet with your released CI’s a minimum of once each month.

At this point, your Core Group will have an opening. Go back to step one and start over, but this time, you have the other Core Group members to join you in the process. Once you’ve prayerfully petitioned our Father for His direction and selection, ask your remaining Core Group members to join you in prayer as well. Present your choice, and if you have unanimity, invite the person to “come see” for two or three meetings. Explain the entire process; allow the other Core Group members to share their testimony of what they’ve experienced in the Core Group life together. At the end of the “come see” period, ask the candidate to carefully consider joining the Group. This is the “follow me” stage where Jesus devoted Himself to their lives and it simply should not be rushed. If they respond positively and all the Group is in agreement, begin. If the person chooses not to join the Core Group, encourage them and continue praying for another.

As you’ll discover, Core Groups can be an incredible means of rediscovering the church as the Body of Christ. We are all members of Christ and members one of another as Christians. "If one suffers, all suffer. If one rejoices all rejoice." Stick with the Group and work things out until the deep bonds of our common life in Jesus are discovered. Then begin releasing each person so that they can begin to repeat the same passion, promise, and power of God through their own Core Group.

Core FasTrak: Church-wide Core Launch

1. The FasTrak follows much the same pattern as a single Core launch, with a few additional recommendations. Select and personally invite a number of your most spiritually mature saints (like 6 men, 6 women - no more than 24 total) to join you as you cast the vision for the Core Network (the key is “faithful”).



2. Ask them to count the cost and to give you a call within a week to let you know if they are on board.

3. Have each person complete the Core FasTrak Member Application. Review each application and prayerfully consider each person’s response.

4. Pre-Meeting: Set the meeting time and place and give each person their Core workbook. Ask them to review pages 8-12 BEFORE the gathering. Depending upon the number of initial candidates, arrange the room with tables and chairs in a large circle (no more than four chairs to a table). Try and lead from the center of the tables instead of the front if possible - this keeps everyone on the same level. Refreshments are always welcomed. You can either hand-select potential, future Core leaders and have them sit at designated tables with those you believe will be a good fit or if you are really bold, allow people to form groups as they assimilate together naturally (men with men, women with women). One way to do this is before everyone comes together the first time, you place table tents on each table with names

such as Peter, Barnabas, Paul, Timothy, Titus, Ruth, Naomi, and Esther. It is interesting to note that people gravitate to the tables where they sense they are spiritually. They will also assimilate with others they are comfortable with, too. This can be good and not so good. You will need to be spiritually discerning and not allow “clicks” to form.



Sometimes people will need a gentle nudge to get out of their comfort zones - places that are familiar, but could be hampering God’s will for community. Initially, these tables should be called table groups. Eventually, leaders will emerge, but initially, they should be called table leaders. At week 8 the table groups become Core Groups and the leaders are called Core leaders. Remember, the entire 12-week FasTrak is designed to develop Core Groups with built-in Core Group Instructors. At the end of the 12-week period, the hope is to have as many new Core Groups and released Core Instructors as you have table groups. Each week you will have less and less preliminary instruction time, allowing the table leaders opportunity to lead the group.

5. Meeting Weeks 1-7: Start and finish on time each week. To begin, allow 5-10 minutes for fellowship/refreshments. Start with prayer. Allow for introduction time. Recast the vision. Ask the entire group to dialogue in their groups asking something like: “If your home was on fire, and you had only one opportunity to go in and get one thing of significance, what would that one thing be?” Each week, start with some interesting, yet invasive question and allow the group time to dialogue. This is great way to get everyone moving in transparency and openness. Each week spend a few minutes providing a brief overview of the Lesson. Provide an illustration, and then allow each table group ample opportunity to dialogue at their tables. Remember, you are establishing the foundation for Core in a laboratory setting - the end result is that you will release all these table groups as Core Groups at the end of the 12-week period to continue forward on their own.

6. Week 8: If you have not assigned leadership previously, ask each group to anonymously write on a piece of paper who they think would be the best candidate as a Core Group Instructor from their table. Prayerfully review. You might also share the results with your staff or leadership team and gather their input, too.

7. Week 9: Announce your Core Group Instructors and explain again that each table group will continue at “week 13” with the Core Group Instructor. Remember, the FasTrak is 12-weeks - week 13 will be the first time each group begins meeting outside the FasTrak. Be careful to explain how you reached your decision and that every person involved in the process will at some point become Core Instructors. Otherwise, people have a tendency to allow pride to enter into the Group!

8. Week 10: Get with your Core Instructors. They need your support and encouragement. They will need to let you know when and where their groups will meet on week 13. These folks represent your entire discipleship leadership. These are those you will want to invest heavily in prayer and time. Be intentional about building your relationship with your released CI’s. Gather your CI’s together at least once each month for open sharing, to discuss problems they might encounter, and to learn from one another.

9. Week 11: Make sure all your Core Instructors have their time and meeting place arranged. Assist them outside the groups, too.

10. Week 12: This is a special day. The table groups have bonded. Core Instructors have been working with their groups for 4 weeks and now it's time to celebrate! Have a special presentation. Have a special breakfast or luncheon. You might even want to announce the new Core Groups to the body during your weekend service. Let them know how much you value them becoming disciples and disciple-makers! At the end, have everyone gather together and pray a blessing over the entire group and release them as Core Groups.



Real Life FasTrak Core Launch Story

I have provided the following Core Discipleship launch overview so that you can visualize and perhaps glean steps for your launch.

New River Fellowship (NRF), Hudson Oaks, Texas, a contemporary, elder-led, interdenominational church, embraced, pioneered, and field-tested the 3-Strand church model and continues to see transformed lives as a result of this process. Over a period of seven years, the church went from one to four services and grew from about 267 to over 1,000 people in attendance each weekend.

We decided to pioneer the first church-wide Core discipleship launch. We called it the Core FasTrak. At the end of an eight week period, we had 22 Core Groups with 26 newly released Core instructors and with 67 disciples in training.

Phillip Hearn, Founder and former Senior Pastor of NRF, introduced the 3-Strand process to the church by teaching a 3-part sermon series entitled, "The 412 Trilogy" based on Ecclesiastes 4:12 and specifically, the 3-strand church model. The series focused on the three discipleship levels of the 3-strand church model: Crowd, cell and Core. A call to action after each sermon included a pre-printed insert in the church bulletin asking people to commit to an area of ministry corresponding to the Crowd, Cell, or Core.

- Crowd Purpose: to get people involved with introductory levels of ministry such as greeting and hospitality.
- Cell Purpose: to get people involved in an existing Cell groups or attend a multiple-week leadership training series.
- Core Purpose: to call out those desiring a deeper devotion to Jesus, His Great Commandment and Great Commission.

The Core insert provided a brief overview of Core with the requirements of being a member of the church and in a cell group. Initially, 40 people responded and came to an initial and more detailed 90-minute presentation scheduled one week after the sermon series. At the conclusion of this introductory presentation, each person was then asked to prayerfully consider the cost and calling to Core discipleship and provided a two-week period to respond. Additionally, each person was given a Core application. Twenty eight people completed the application and

agreed to attend a 12-week Core Training Workshop (Saturday mornings from 7:00am - 8:30am - this time slot served to test commitment levels as well) with the understanding that over the 12-week training time, some would be called out as Core instructors based on their commitment, spiritual maturity and leadership qualifications as previously presented within this overview. Others would be given the opportunity to continue as members of the newly formed Core Groups at the end of the 12-week training. The following is a week-by-week account of the NRF FasTrak in journal format.

Week 1

The first Core Training session was held in the multi-purpose room at New River from 7-8:30am. All existing Core instructors were asked to be present to serve breakfast and demonstrate a servant's heart. Chairs were purposely arranged in groups of four (men with men, women with women) with no tables. This introductory time provided opportunity for everyone to get to know one another, receive their copy of the Core Workbook, and to receive instruction about the next week's lesson. Each group was asked to pray for those in their group and a general closing prayer made. Each person was asked to begin praying for those in their table group.

Week 2

Core instructors arrived at 6:00am to begin praying and preparing for the session. Breakfast was not served at this session, only coffee. Seven round tables were brought in and four chairs positioned around each table. Small, hand-made table tents were made, each with the names like Barnabas, Paul, Timothy, Esther, Naomi, Ruth and Hannah. Purposely, three of the tables were set at one end of the room and the remaining four were positioned at the opposite end (men with men, women with women). The purpose of the table tents was to allow each person to choose which table best represented their perceived level of maturity and recognition. Interestingly, this arrangement provided for an integration of spiritually like-minded individuals at each table. The Core director stood in the middle of the room, prayed for all, and commended each person for their commitment. The director asked if all had completed lesson one and the reply was nearly unanimous. It was then asked if anyone knew the scripture memory verse and nearly everyone in the room recited the verse! The group was then asked the question, "If you had only until 5:00pm this day to live, how would you spend your day?" Each table was given time to dialogue and the answers were: 1) Family, and 2) Friends. It was then asked, "If this is true, and family and friends are truly important, what changes do you need to make to make family and friends more a part of your lifestyle?" The answers proved to be convicting and took each group into a deeper level of mutual transparency. The instructor then asked each table to contact other members of their table during the week and hold each other accountable.



The group was then asked to go over lesson one within their table groups. This provided a simulation of a Core group. The Group was also asked to make an offering for those not able to purchase the recommended books, *Practicing His Presence* and *My Utmost For His Highest*, and to sponsor two individuals in the group who were not able to afford the Core workbook. More than enough was provided to purchase additional books.



The group was then asked to pray for each other, reminded that lesson two was to be completed for next week and each table prayed for those in their group.

Week 3

Core instructors arrived at 6:00am to begin praying and preparing for the session. Breakfast was not served at this session, only coffee. Again, seven round tables were brought in and four chairs positioned around each table. The table tents were once again placed at the same tables like the previous week. Again, this arrangement provided for an

integration of spiritually like-minded individuals at each table. The Core director stood in the middle of the room, prayed for all, and commended each person for their commitment. The director asked if all had completed lesson two and if they had memorized the scripture (yes). The group was then asked to review Heb. 3:13 and discuss in their groups. What was discovered was that we are to encourage one another, but very few actually are encouragers - but they love to receive encouragement.

Three new Core instructors (from already existing Core Groups) were introduced to the FasTrak Group. Each of these three were first recommended by their Core instructors after having demonstrated faithfulness and commitment. They were then presented to all other existing Core instructors and church leadership for review (tremendous safety and blessing in receiving such a thorough evaluation).

The group was then asked to go over lesson two at their table groups. This provided a simulation of a Core group. Each person was given a copy of *My Utmost For His Highest and Practicing His Presence*.

The group was then asked to pray for each other, reminded that lesson three was to be completed for next week and the meeting finished at 8:30am.

Week 4

Core instructors arrived at 6:00am to begin praying and preparing for the session. Coffee prepared. Six tables arranged in a tighter circle with four chairs positioned around each table. The table tents were once again placed at the same tables like the previous week. Again, this arrangement provided for an integration of spiritually like-minded individuals at each table. The Core director began, but this time passed off the teaching to other Core instructors. Short teaching on dealing with offenses (Mth. 5, 18). The group was then allowed to spend more time together going over the lesson within each group. All the Core instructors, out of sight, discussed the groups being formed, those whom they believed were demonstrating "servant leadership", gave brief reports to their existing Core groups, and we prayed. The Group was released at 8:34am. Community at a deeper level than most cell groups is now taking place.

Week 5

Notably, the group has become completely assimilated and are beginning to establish relation-

ships beyond normal small group settings. Lesson 4 in the Core Workbook is designed to be facilitated over two weeks. This week nearly everyone completed the work study and many had begun asking others to complete the assessments. The group was then allowed to spend the remainder of their time together going over the lesson within each group, taking the accountability questions into a personal level, and praying for one another. Many of the members were quickened and convicted, much prayer and tears. The Core instructors discussed those who might become table leaders. Over the next week, the instructors will determine table leaders (potential Core instructors at the end of the 12-week training) and will announce table leaders at the next session. The Group was released at 8:45am. Core is taking place both horizontally and vertically with people beginning to form relationships outside the 12-week training.

Week 6

Today we began week 6 - we are midway through the 12-week training. The Core instructors were asked to stay at home - the Core director facilitated. The table groups are beginning to bond in community - these are the basis for Core Groups at the end of the 12-week training. Continued with Lesson 4. This time allowing more time for each group to develop deeper relationships. It was decided to hold off on naming table leaders until the spiritual assessments were reviewed. Next week, we should be able to announce. Next week we begin Lesson 5.

Week 7

The table tents were not placed on the tables for the first time. The members are assembled. Today we announced the new Core table leaders (7 people chosen after listening to the Core Instructor's observations, reviewing the Lesson 4 assessments, much prayer and consideration and then jointly discussing with the senior pastor). One of the members brought whole onions for each of the members and instructed each person to silently peel the onion to its Core. The point of the exercise was to draw observations regarding our own hearts and how God gently removes layer after layer until nothing separates us from His love. A very powerful demonstration. Not a dry eye in the class! Next week we will review Lesson 6 - the first of the five Core foundations.



Week 8

The Core table instructors were announced again and then allowed to lead the Groups. Next week we will review Lesson 7 - the second of the five Core foundations.

Week 9

Each of the tables were asked to determine their "13th Week" meeting place, time and schedule and let the entire group know next Saturday. Each of the tables are beginning to meet outside the Saturday morning times and community is being developed. The very thing most people long for, but never experience is being formed. Next week we will review Lesson 8 - the third of the five Core foundations.

Week 10

The Core table instructors announced their "13th week" schedules when each of the groups no longer meet corporately, but as Core Groups beyond the 12-Week training. There is a mixed

sense of expectation and trepidation. Next week we will review Lesson 9 - the fourth of the five Core foundations.

Week 11

The Core table instructors were given the entire time together to discuss this week's lesson. Next week we will review Lesson 10 - the fifth of the five Core foundations.

Week 12

Today was the last day of our 12-week Core discipleship training/workshop. We announced the 7 newly released Core instructors and Core Groups. The Senior Pastor, who had himself been recently released from a Core Group, blessed the entire group. Many testimonies were shared - all pointing toward Gods' Word, communion, fellowship, and prayer. Additionally, we presented each newly released Core instructor with a Core pendant as a reminder of their commitment, unity, and fellowship. Each CI is looking forward to their "13th" week - the following week just after the 12-week FasTrak. In all, 7 new CI's were released, 7 groups formed, and 27 people involved in Core through this first FasTrak launch.

Core Group Instructors (Example for your use)

"... but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children" (1 Thessalonians 2:7).

A disciple-maker is a more spiritually mature person who sincerely desires that those they disciple become fully equipped and spiritually mature. They are folks who will:

Encourage you

We tend to become what the most important person in our lives thinks we will become. Great instructors are those who bring out the best in us. They are great encouragers.

Confront you

Proverbs 27:5,6 says, *"Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."* This is someone who knows that loving confrontation develops a person and that criticism destroys a person. It is someone who knows that to critique is to criticize. He or she will hold you accountable while demonstrating a spirit of mutual submission and humility. A disciple-maker is a person in your life who will ask you the hard questions like: "Are you walking in the Spirit?" Or, "Are you blameless before God and man - are there any known offenses in your life?" Or, "Are you involved in anything that would bring harm to Jesus' name such as sexual immorality?" Disciple-makers know the point is always restoration and patiently work to that end. Disciple-makers are people who earn your trust in time; they become trustworthy allies.

Intercede for you

A disciple-maker is bold in their witness, passionate about God's promises, committed to but humble in their relationships with others. They act as a bridge between God and those they are praying for and are bonded together with those they are discipling. They are faithful (2 Timothy 2:2), obedient to God's Word (John 8:31), loving (John 13:35), and fruitful (John 15:8).

Be your lifelong friend and partner

Just as I will always be father to my children, likewise, I have made life-long commitments

to those the Lord has entrusted to me as His disciples. It is in knowing that I have this responsibility and great privilege that brings a heightened sense of accountability. Conception is the stuff of God; parenting is a life-long partnership (Hebrews 13:5).

Expectations & Qualifications

1. To be consistent and committed to living the Christian life-style. “Leadership by example.”
2. To be consistent and committed to pray for those in leadership over you and those God has entrusted into your care.
3. To maintain a Biblically solid family life.
4. To make yourself available to serve and minister to those entrusted to you.
5. To be accountable to those responsible for you. To stay within the Core guidelines.

Core Group Instructor Guidelines

1. Be born again (John 3:3-6).
2. Be an active member of the church.
3. Adhere to the statement of faith of the church.
4. Share the church’s goal and vision; submitted to the biblical authority of church leadership.
5. Be faithful in church attendance and a cheerful giver.
6. Be committed to fulfil God’s will in his/her life.
7. Be prepared to do his/her share in the ministry.
8. Fulfill the criteria found in the Word (1 Tim. 3:8-12):
 - Display the fruits of Christian living
 - Be blameless and beyond reproach in their conduct
 - Be of good standing within the church and outside
 - Be faithful in all things
 - Be gentle and humble
 - Not violent nor quarrelsome
 - Be reverent
 - Be temperate and self controlled
 - Live in wisdom and honor with their spouses (if married)
 - Manage home affairs well
 - Not be greedy for money
 - Not be covetous
 - Not be double tongued
 - Not slanderous
9. Ideally, in a life group - also known as small groups, home groups, etc., (encourage CI’s to prayerfully consider choosing their new Core members from within their life group).
10. In a Core group or recommended through the Core FasTrak training process.
11. Demonstrated ongoing, growing obedience to God’s Word (John 8:31).
12. Are recognized as loving, having an attitude that shows itself in action by thinking and being devoted to others’ welfare rather than their own (John 13:35; 1 Cor. 13); Spirit led.
13. Are fruitful (John 15:8); their relationship is ever-increasing with God and with others; Committed to the Great Commandment, Great Commission, Acts 2:42, Eph. 4:11-13, and 2 Tim. 2:2 (the Core process) – faithful men and women who, as a life-style, will make disciples of Jesus, teaching them to observe all that He commanded.
14. Have been recommended by a CI, interviewed and approved by the Core Group Pastor,

senior pastor or elder team (church leadership).

15. Prior to release, they should have their first Core members selected, with time/place approved by their Core Coach (a Core coach is the person who recommends/releases a new CI).

Job Description of Core Group Instructors

The Core Group instructor Must:

1. Facilitate the Core Group.
2. Disciple, instruct, teach, encourage, edify, exhort, admonish, and feed the Core members.
3. Become a “spiritual parent” to Core Group members (1 Thess. 2:7, 11).
4. Prays for the Core Group regularly.
5. Takes lead in partnership with the Holy Spirit of all aspects of the Core Group.
6. Meets or contacts the church leadership team on a minimum bimonthly basis for guidance, encouragement, prayer, and reporting.
7. Encourages the members to become engaged in outreach projects in the community.
8. Attends all Core Group leadership gatherings/meetings.
9. Trains Core Group disciples (spiritual parenting).
10. Ensures that the Core Group disciples meet the following requirements:
 - Completes the Core Group training workbook (at minimum through lesson 10)
 - Attends all Core Group gatherings/meetings
 - Is approved by a Core instructor and church leadership

How to Become a Core Group Instructor

The most effective way to become a Core Group instructor is to first be a Core Group member. This offers you practical experience in a Core Group setting before you establish your own Core Group. The following process has proven to be successful:

Process for Releasing a Core Instructor (CI):

1. An existing Core instructor makes the recommendation to the Core Pastor/Director or church leadership.
2. The recommendation is then forwarded to all existing Core instructors and church pastors/staff/life group leaders for their review/comments (this should be unanimous - if not, this provides a wonderful opportunity for restoration/reconciliation).
3. The recommendation is then submitted to church leadership (senior pastor/elders) for final review and recommendation (again, unanimous - if not, this provides an opportunity for additional training time with candidate).
4. Once approved unanimously through these channels, the CI recognizes and releases the new CI having the approval and support of the church to launch their Core Group.
5. Coaches are responsible for ongoing spiritual life support and assistance of those they release.

Making Disciples

Assisting and partnering with the Holy Spirit in developing disciples into spiritually mature believers should be one of your top priorities. With each disciple that you develop, you help establish the pattern for future leadership within the church. Each person you train, in turn, trains another and so on



as the groups multiply. Not only do you invest in their lives but also in their future as leaders. It is critical that you impart to them all you are able in the time that you are together.

1. Make sure the disciples are praying: praying is one of the most powerful tools that a person can use to become spiritually mature. You should help develop this discipline with your disciples. You should meet with your disciples at least once a week and maintain contact throughout the week. Your weekly Core time is when you carry on spiritual warfare for your group and share insight with your disciples that will help them develop in their maturity. This informal time together should begin with prayer. This will bond you in unity in the Spirit, develop a greater understanding of the heart of God for each person in your group, and put you in an atmosphere of faith.

2. Help them to see the potential in others: Anytime that you meet with your disciples it should be in an attitude of faith, that is, looking to what the faith vision for each person might be. It is not to be a time of criticism or hopeless talk concerning shortcomings. You are to help your disciples envision what the Core Group members are able to become under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes when people are new to ministry it is difficult for them to see past where people are, to where they will eventually be. Begin with the end in mind! Your own attitude in dealing with members in your group will have a great deal to do with how they see others. Teach them that prayer changes even the darkest of circumstances.

3. Encourage them as they develop in leadership: Each disciple needs to know that as they develop into leadership God will be able to use them in a mighty way in Core Group ministry. They need to be assured that the anointing and authority are from God and that as they learn to listen and follow Him more closely, both will increase. Point out the areas in which they are led of the Spirit and follow Him well. Give them opportunity to grow in the Spirit. Your Core members should lead the meeting on occasion. Prayerfully select those sessions and then offer them honest critiques mixed with love and encouragement. It is better to share an area with them that needs some work and allow them to grow in that area than to tell them all is well and it really is not. This is their only opportunity to train for leadership. Speak the truth in love and help them to become all that God is challenging them to be.

4. Help them to become transparent: To be effective in Core Group leadership, everyone, especially leaders, must be willing to share their failures as well as their successes. When people are shown how Jesus helped someone else to overcome a failure, they can believe Him to help them do the same. Help your disciples become transparent in this way so that they are not threatened to share the areas where they need the most help. Very often, leaders feel that if they share weaknesses, the others in their group will not respect them as leaders. Encourage them that the very things that they are overcoming with the help of the Lord are the things that speak to others in the group who are struggling for victory. It is not a sign of weakness, but of strength in Jesus that they are free to admit their insufficiency. It is through the sharing of how the Word changed their relationship that others receive hope and direction for the same life changes to occur in their lives.

5. Determine if your Core members are ready to lead a group: As a Core Group discipler, you are given the responsibility to offer input to your church leadership regarding

your disciples's ability to lead a group of their own. The standard expectation is that they will be ready to lead at the end of the training period, but if you assess that they are not fully equipped, it is up to you to share your concern with leadership. A person does not automatically begin leading a Core Group after they have been a Core member. Each person is given ample time to transition into leadership comfortably. Remember, all leaders begin their leadership role a bit shaky and unsure of themselves. Many problems that would keep them from leadership would be an inability or unwillingness to pray, a man not taking the headship of his household or a wife refusing to defer to her husband as head, disagreement with the basic beliefs of the Core Group ministries or your church, or refusal to submit to authority. If you have any questions regarding your Core members, contact your church leadership. The promotion of a disciples to leadership is not automatic. Each Core instructor must determine if their Core members are ready.

6. Release them as your Core members and receive them as peers: This is one of the most difficult areas for those in authority, but once your Core members assume leadership of their own group, you are no longer their direct "supervisor", you are now their peers. Jesus called His disciples "friends" at this point. Though you will continue as their coach, you are no longer in authority over them and are no longer responsible for their development as leaders. This now becomes the role of church leadership. You have a new disciples to nurture.

The relationship you will develop in Core is one of the closest you will ever experience in the body of Christ. When this special relationship comes to an end, you will remain lifelong friends. However, the previous relationship must change. You must separate from them in a way you related as the lead authority and they need to separate from you as your Core members. It is necessary to break the ties that were established as you functioned together in leadership. Your leadership will help you make the transition and help your disciples to become established as leaders of their own group.

Core Group Leader Responsibilities

Since Core members will eventually establish a Core Group of their own, it is important that the Core leader is constantly training them and delegating different responsibilities to them. Some of the basic responsibilities of the Core members are:

1. Be in harmony with the leader to assist in any needs.
2. Be in agreement in prayer with the leader.
3. Help coordinate the different parts of the meeting.
4. Be available for the needs of other Core members.
5. Be available and ready to teach the lesson upon the leader's request.
6. Attend all leadership meetings and classes provided for the Core Groups.
7. Properly appeal to your church leadership if something incorrect is going on within your group. Core members are an important source of accountability within each Core Group.

Multiplying Your Core Groups

One of the goals of every Core Group is to multiply at appropriate times (normally from 3-12 months), having your Core members start a brand new Core Group (the purpose is to make disciples who make disciples).

1. Training and developing Core members throughout the growth process of the Core Group is

essential.

2. When it is time to multiply your group, you will need to announce intentions to launch out a new group to all members.
3. Announce the location of the new meeting and the name of the new Core leader.
4. Give approximately 4-8 weeks from the first announcement to the actual new group meeting. NOTE: Building relationships, developing Core members and encouraging growth must be ongoing to make Core Group multiplication/discipleship successful. Integrate multiplication/discipleship as an ongoing goal and relate this Core concept to the members often.

Core Meeting Suggestions

- Relax. Do not make the meeting seem churchy, formal or like a classroom. Avoid working in a formal, classroom like setting. This lends to a “conference” experience and detours from building relationships.
- Teach by discussion, rather than lecturing. Don’t be preachy to your Core Group.
- Keep the focus toward the Lord instead of allowing the Core Group to become a place to discuss current world affairs, sports or the next door neighbors. Keep the discussion on personal application and relevant experience. Expect something to happen!
- The Core Group should not be a pulpit for someone to come and practice their preaching for future ministry.
- Always motivate, comfort, encourage and build up (1 Thess 5:5-24). Feed the sheep. Locate the people spiritually and try to minister to everyone on their own level. DO NOT JUDGE.
- Do not criticize leaders, those in authority, or other churches at all. Period.
- Do not “lord it over” those in your group. Remember, we all have free will and though you can make gentle suggestions, you should never demand obedience. Prayer and your pastoral team are your safety net.

When Problems Arise

Problems may arise at times. If a difference of opinion occurs it is not a big deal and every situation can be worked through. As long as you stay within the general format, the group as a whole will not be affected. Here are some tips to help you deal with situations that might arise:

1. Show love to all people. Do not become angry or frustrated.
2. Keep order - let the group know you are the leader by being organized and ready for your meeting. When someone is out of order with a comment or act, tell them to please wait until you ask for their input. If you don’t want them speaking, don’t ask for their input, then after the meeting tell them why you did not call on them.
3. Stay calm - don’t become riled up and argue. This will make everyone else uptight and stop the flow of your meeting. Stay calm and handle the situation lovingly.
4. Move on - don’t stop your meeting to discuss the behavior of the individual that is being disruptive. Move on as if it did not mean a thing (it really does not) and do what you are there to do. If you need additional input on how to handle the situation, speak to your pastor at a later time. Don’t talk about the problem with other group members.
5. Consult with your pastor concerning any individual you feel you may have repeated problems with. Your pastor or leadership are responsible for discipline. Restoration is always the guiding principle.

Discipline

A Core group instructor is accountable to their local church leadership for any of the following

reasons:

1. Not fulfilling the ministry assignments that they have accepted.
2. Immorality.
3. Demonstrated bitterness, disloyalty, or strife which causes harm to others within the assembly.
4. Deviating from the process and policies set by church leadership.
5. Teaching false doctrines and generating confusion in the body.
6. Allowing unauthorized individuals to teach or minister within your groups.

Procedure For Discipline

1. As best determined and applied by your local church leadership, discipline should include a prayerful discussion with leadership up to removal from Core for a period of time commensurate to the offense.
2. All discipline should be redemptive in nature with the purpose of restoring the individual back into God's will. Biblical guidelines are outlined in Mth. 18:15-20.

Frequently Asked Questions: FAQs

Our church wants to launch Core Discipleship. Do we need to invite you to come train our group?

Though I would truly be honored and sincerely delight in assisting you, the reality is that Core is simple and easily reproducible. The following will be of help. Also note that I am here to lend assistance along the way. Feel free to contact me.

1. Assuming you are the senior pastor or in leadership, take a few weeks and prayerfully consider those who have your heart and a heart for evangelism/discipleship (your most spiritually mature men/women) - do this quietly and without fanfare. If you are not in leadership but want to launch a Core, I would strongly suggest that you first visit with your church leadership and share with them your vision, this overview, the Core web site and resources. With their approval, you can then begin seeking after those you will call out for your first discipleship group.
2. Once you've determined your potential candidates, review the Core resource chart on our website or contained in this overview. Once you've determined the appropriate discipleship resources, I would suggest that you personally invite those few individuals to a vision casting time together - you present the three-strand church model, the biblical process of discipleship, and that you are inviting them to join you in your Core Group launch (all of this is presented in the Core Workbook). Give them a couple weeks to mull this over with instruction to get back to you with their decision. Once you have their commitment, you can provide a workbook to each person, set a date for your first Core meeting and begin.
3. I am available to assist. The experience I have gleaned over the years in the Core process and discipleship in general may be a blessing as you launch your Core discipleship process. My greatest desire is to see Jesus exalted, the Great Commission fulfilled, and lives transformed; to that end, I am committed to helping you with a successful Core launch and the establishment of your Core network.

I stand ready to serve you in whatever ways our Father directs. If that means my coming to your church, so be it. If it means launching your Core network as I have just outlined, so be it. Regardless, you have my heart and I am here to serve.

If you have questions, please write or give me a call and we can discuss in more detail.

I lead a Core. Can I launch another Core Group?

Because the very nature of Core is spiritual parenting, I would suggest you not lead more than 2 Core Groups at any one time - it would be like having up to six children of various age levels in your home. Some instructors can easily disciple one person while others can easily train six. It depends on how you're spirit-wired! We've released instructors who remain in their original Core Group and launch another (Core becomes a band of brothers or sisters for life). We've also had Core instructors who learn the process, launch one Core and then see the need for another. The great thing about Core is that once you have two or more Core Groups, you can then bounce ideas, questions, concerns, leadership techniques, and countless other things off the other instructors. Some of the richest and most profound training tips have come from released

Core instructors.

I'm not in a Core Group right now. Once I complete the 12-week Core FasTrak workshop, will I be released to launch my own Core Group?

Our hopes are that everyone who begins the process will in time be released as Core instructors. For some, this might take just a few weeks to see the process and for us to release them as instructors. Others might take longer. We must remember that the definition of a Core discipleship group is “a safe, loving, confidential personal relationship where a more spiritually mature instructor teaches another to observe all that Jesus commanded” (Mth. 28:19,20). For some, this may take longer than the 12-week workshop.

I'm in a Core Group. Can I stay in my existing Core Group and complete the 12-week Core FasTrak workshop with the hopes of being released as an instructor sooner?

The best place to learn Core is in a Core Group. I would suggest that you stay in your existing Core Group because you will develop lifelong relationships not found in any other process. Yes, you can ask to be a part of the Core FasTrak, but again, the decision to release someone into leadership will be based on biblical qualifications, spiritual maturity, maintaining the vision/mission of the church, being rightly related to biblical authority, etc. These are all criteria that Core instructors and church leadership will prayerfully consider before releasing anyone into leadership.

I'm not in a small group but want to be a part of the Core network. What must I do?

Ideally, each person should be a member of the church, be a small group member, and will then be considered based on their level of commitment to Jesus Christ (Mth. 22:37-40; 28:19-20; John 8:31; John 13:35; John 15:8; and 2 Timothy 2:2). In essence, those who love God and others, obey His Word, are committed to making disciples teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded.

I've had people ask me how they can join a Core Group. What do I tell them?

Core members are hand-selected and called out by Core instructors after much prayer, meditation, and counsel. In fact, once a Core Group is formed, the instructor is taught to begin asking each Core member to pray for two converts and those whom they will disciple. Core follows the same process of selecting individuals for potential Core members as Jesus did (Luke 6:12,13). One of the foundational keys of the Core process is found in 2 Timothy 2:2: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men, who will be able to teach others.” The word “trust” here is used by the Apostle Paul as a commercial term. For instance, a bank guards money entrusted to it. Similarly, Core instructors are to entrust spiritual teaching to those who will keep it safe and who have the same heart to repeat the very process again. How do we know who is worthy of such trust? Paul tells us to look for faithful men. The Greek word for faithful is pistos: those who are believing, loyal, reliable, steadfast. Additionally, I would look for candidates who have your heart and especially those who are obedient to God's Word, loving, and who bear fruit - have a heart for reaching the lost and committed to discipleship (John 8:31,32; 13:35; 15:8). Core Discipleship takes seriously the call to biblical discipleship. God wants us to commit ourselves to making disciples, but only to those who will be true to the sacred trust that is given as the Word is accurately taught, pre-

served and transmitted. Just as is true in natural parenting, spiritual parenting in the Core is a lifetime of adventure and the adventure of a lifetime. Enjoy!

I'm learning that nearly everything about Core is spiritual. Is there anything as a Core discipler that I can use to help translate these spiritual issues into something more within my experience level?

We must remember that the first institution God created was the family. I've learned that most every issue in life, church, and Core can be answered when I ask, "Now what situation or event in my family life is this like and how would/should I handle it?" You'll be surprised at how close natural family principles parallel spiritual realities and provide insight into responding to spiritual realities.

How important are the five major Scriptures, the "handshake" of Core to the success of a Core Group?

The Great Commandment (Mth. 22:37-40), Great Commission (Mth. 28:19,20), Acts 2:42, Eph. 4:11-13 and 2 Tim. 2:2 are the 'handshake' of Core. These five Scriptures are very important to the Core and will help keep the focus, mission, vision, and purpose alive and fresh each time the Group gathers. I think that every couple of months you should ask one of the Group to recite any or all five and challenge the members to not only memorize but to fully embrace the significance of each of these passages and God's intended purpose for the Core.

My Group isn't contacting each other during the week. Help!

Let me be straight forward, if you are not contacting your group members during the week, they will certainly not contact you. In other words, what you seed is what you reap. I've made it a practice to call each of the Core members at least once each week. My purpose is entirely because I love them and sincerely care about what's going on in their lives. It helps to schedule a specific day and time to contact each member and like the Nike ads tell us, "Just do it."

I've been released to launch a Core Group and I'm really nervous. Any advise?

You're in good hands and with the right heart. All of us are concerned at first, but remember that the basis of what Core is all about is relational discipleship. Heavy emphasis on relational and discipleship. You'll find that unlike the relationships in the crowd or cell, you'll become very close to those in your Core. These precious brothers and sisters have been hand-selected, prayed over, and chosen first by God and then by church leadership. Pray. Ask God to guide you. Embrace a spirit of humility. Being Spirit led is simply being in the right place at the right time talking to the right person with the right Word. You'll do fine because the Core Network serves not only as a safety net, but that the entire team is first submitted to Christ Jesus as Head and operating beneath the biblical authority and permission of your Church.

When do you know when to release someone into Core leadership?

The spiritual life assessment tool in the Core workbook will help you decide because it's all about character and leadership traits (the same criteria for eldership/leadership in the church). Secondly, you have the added benefit of taking each and every major issue, concern, and especially the possibility of releasing someone into leadership before the counsel of other released Core Group leadership and church leadership to help you in making your decision. You're not alone! Additionally, I would never release anyone until they have proven faithful (2 Tim. 2:2). That does not mean that they have everything all together, otherwise, none of us - including the

Apostles - would ever be released. I can't begin to tell you how vitally important it is to prayerfully and carefully consider each person and to make sure that they are observing all that Jesus commanded. Character and faithfulness are paramount to the release of a disciple as an instructor - they must see Jesus' vision and greatly desire to see the fulfillment of the Great Commandment through the Great Commission from a pure heart.

What is the single largest challenge you've faced as an instructor?

Remembering that this is God's process and that He is faithful to complete what He's begun. I've also discovered that it's very easy to give my heart to some of these guys because of the safety net, confidence, and friendship we develop. This is good and not so good. I must remember that Jesus gave His heart to no one except the Father - and though He gave His life for us - His disciples - He never, ever gave His deepest heart to any living human. Why? We're human and we make mistakes! My counsel to you is to go deep with your members, but never lose sight of the Great Commandment and Great Commission. Your job as a Core instructor is to 'make disciples' and in the process, we sometimes lose sight of the 'big picture.'

Our group members are at three levels of spiritual maturity. At what level should I teach?

Stay the course using your Core Workbook, but don't go any deeper than the spiritually 'young adult' in the Group (your spiritually middle son or daughter). You should also be spending considerable time with all the Group members throughout the week outside the Group meeting. It is then that you can meet each person at their appropriate levels of maturity.

I have one member who does not seem to be moving forward. What do I do?

In a word, forbear. However, at each three-month period, I think it's a good idea to ask everyone if they want to continue or bail. If someone decides that Core is not for them, bless them, let them go, and begin praying for your new member.

Our instructor is leaving. What do we do?

Get with the remaining Core Group instructors and church leadership. Pray. Remember, a Core Group instructor must be someone released by a Core instructor. Don't rush the process even if your existing Core continues for several weeks without an instructor.

We have people in our church wanting to join a Core, but we don't have released instructors. What do we do?

Wait until you have released instructors.

We're really excited about the Core Process. Is it OK to announce that we're launching a Core network from the pulpit before we have instructors?

I would advise against it unless you are considering a FasTrak launch. Reason being that once you do, you'll have people waiting in line with no instructors to disciple them. Best way is to start quietly and build a network first. Then, as you have instructors, invite people to come on board.

I've just released a member and he's now launching another Core. Should he ask for my counsel before he launches his Core Group?

If you have done your job as a disciple-maker, he should have been reporting his disciple-

ship progress all along. Once two instructors are in full operation, every major decision should involve them. As you continue to multiply, you'll discover a tremendous safety net in the multitude of like-minded counsel. And always, always, always, your church leadership should be kept abreast of major decisions - beforehand, not after the fact.

It seems that our instructor “lords it over” us. Is this the way Core Groups are supposed to be?

No. Get with your church leadership and Core Team Leader in your church and seek counsel.

How can I get my group to complete the studies?

Depending on how long this has been going on, remind everyone of the handshake of Core. If the problem persists, you're seeing a character flaw - either in you or them - and you will need to consider why this is taking place. Get with your leadership and discuss.

Our group seems to have difficulty memorizing the Scriptures. Should I hold them accountable?

Yes, but with love, grace and patience. Remember, one of the Core values is devoted to spending time in God's Word and we must encourage the members to commit to memorizing key scriptures. This will pay out in great dividends when they need it the most.

I have a lot of people wanting to get into a group but not many leaders. How do I get started?

You might consider the FasTrak launch. This workshop is intensive and runs each week for 12 consecutive weeks.

What is the “Fastrak”?

“Fastrak” is an accelerated process of launching the Core Group Network in just 12-weeks. The senior pastor or appointed FasTrak instructor guides the group through the first 10 Lessons found in the Core Workbook.

What are the chances that Core groups will take off when my senior pastor isn't sold on the idea?

The chances are not very good if your senior pastor or church leadership are not on board. However, with approval, you might start one group and the fruit will serve as a witness.

How important is it to have a point person on staff who is devoted only to the Core group development?

Over time, it will become important to have a point person devoted to Core group development. If it is a staff person who wears other “hats”, then they should be allowed to invest at least 50% of their time in Core group development, particularly identifying and developing Core instructors.

How do Core groups work if we also have Sunday School?

Many Sunday School-based models begin by incorporating Core groups within their class structure. They cut back on the teaching time a little bit and add more time for prayer, sharing, and discussion. Eventually, they seek to identify leaders in these classes and then birth Core groups out of it. The key thing is to give people a good experience while in the class, so that they hun-

ger for more community outside the class.

What do you mean by a “church of Core groups”?

A church of Core groups is one committed to having people in the church experience Core group community, regardless of what ministry they are a part of or where they serve. It means having a church that is intentional about discipleship and gets it done through the vehicle of Core groups.

At what point do I need to have coaches?

When an instructor releases someone else as a new Core instructor, he or she is now their coach. A coach should have no more three instructors (this forms another triad - the basis of Core); basically, the ratio is one to three. So for every three Core group leaders, it's great to have a coach who encourages, loves, prays for and supports them.

What does a coach do and who does he/she report to?

Basically a coach is there to love and support leaders they have released, helping them identify resources for their groups, helping them problem-solve issues in their Core groups, and connecting them to the ministry and vision of the church. They report to church leadership.

Is there a difference between a Core Group, a small group or an accountability group?

Though a Core Group does have similarities to a home or cell group, it is not a “smaller, small group” or an “accountability group.” A Core Group is smaller, more intimate, gender specific, and more to the heart than most home groups, cell groups, or Sunday school classes and provides a “platform” for even deeper discussion and interaction, discipleship and evangelism.

Is Core Group Ministries a parachurch ministry?

We rejoice in how God has used parachurch ministries to bring multiplied thousands of unsaved people into the kingdom. However, Core Discipleship Ministry, as a biblically-based missions outreach, is centered in the local church. For those who hold to the inspiration and authority of the Word of God, it is difficult to disagree with the biblical model. We believe that the local church stands in a unique relationship to Christ as the mediating and authoritative sending body of the New Testament. This is a vital, biblical principle and we dare not weaken, minimize nor disregard it. As such, Core Group Ministries is an interchurch ministry of Oak-Tree Fellowship and will remain under the oversight of this local church expression until such time that God, our local church leadership and the Core Discipleship directors unanimously hears God direct otherwise. Additionally, we are sensitive to the doctrinal differences among Christians, so we focus on the core teachings of our Christian faith. Our curriculum appeals to a wide spectrum of churches and schools.

Are Core Groups gender specific?

Core Groups are gender specific, while most home groups are made up of mixed genders.

What tools do you use in Core Groups?

Core Groups travel light. We suggest the Core Discipleship Group Workbook and the Bible, and as each Core Group Instructor sees fit, they can choose from other leadership approved, daily devotionals. The Core Group Workbook is a simple, easy-to-use ‘roadmap’ any church of any

size or in any location can use to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. You don't have to be a theologian or a pastor to start a Core Group - just someone who is obedient, loving, and fruitful and who has a willingness to launch into the deep.

Why do you call Core Discipleship Groups a band of brothers and sisters?

Discipling is best accomplished in the relational context of Christian believers helping one another grow and mature in a Core Group setting, just as Jesus disciplined the band of 12 and the inner circle of 3 (Peter, James and John).

Why did you choose the name Core Discipleship Groups?

A Core Group is the name used to describe Jesus' "inner" Core comprised of Peter, James, and John. Meeting weekly, Core Groups participate in studying God's Word, worshipping and praying together, along with finding and extending the support necessary to grow toward maturity in Christ. Core provides for a time to build equality, deep and caring friendships, men with men and women with women. Core is a place to be loved, accepted, and to extend Christ's forgiveness to one another. Core Groups are patterned after the life of Jesus and are designed to develop disciples of Jesus Christ who can then make disciples.



There seems to be a lot of discipleship programs available. What's different about Core Group?

Core is the third strand in the 3-Strand Church model. This grass-roots discipleship level is seen in the "inner group" of Christ (Peter, James and John) and produces the basis of successive leadership development. Core Groups represent a powerful tool for the church. This tool empowers and models Jesus' call to discipleship at a foundational level. Using the Core Group Workbook as a 'roadmap' these groups meet once each week for an hour or two, but because of the intense relationships, accountability, in-depth study of God's Word, prayer, and transparency, those in Core Groups spend more time in communication with each other throughout the week (a natural occurrence). These groups are gender specific. It is spiritual parenting where a "father or mother" in the faith intentionally, relationally, and spiritually births and nurtures a "son or daughter" in the faith until Christ is formed in them. They, in turn, are equipped and released to repeat the process. The actual process involves the developing and maintaining of lifelong relationships, intense reading and application of God's Word, focused prayer, and mutual accountability.

Jesus Said About Discipleship...

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

"And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple"
(Luke 14:27).

"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33).

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples" (John 8:31).

"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another"
(John 13:35).

"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 15:8).

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19,20; underline mine).

Core Tools, Resources & More

Core FasTrak Discipleship Overview/Application

Overview (can be used to present to your church or leadership)

Core Discipleship represents the third-strand of the 3-Strand Church model. Core Groups are gender specific, safe, confidential, interpersonal groups made up of no more than four people (one on one, one on two, and one and three). Core Groups are led by the Holy Spirit, facilitated by a church released Core Group Instructor (CI) and purposes to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.

“Knowing Jesus – making Him known”

Imagine a group of students or adults sharing one goal: to know Jesus Christ deeper and to make Him known to others! Imagine them involved in God’s Word, real fellowship, exciting growth, genuine sharing, prayer and heartfelt love with one another – becoming Christ-like disciples! Imagine a place where no one stands alone, struggles alone, serves alone, develops alone, seeks alone, or grows up alone. Imagine yourself in such a caring, committed community – transforming your life as well as the people in your group!

The Core Discipleship process is a very practical and useful resource that serves both as a leader’s training workbook and a year’s curriculum containing the essential elements needed to mature believers into obedient, loving and fruitful disciples. The Core training workbook is based upon a cord of three strands (Ecc. 4:12) - The 3-Strand Church model.

The 3-Strand Church model integrates a unique, biblically-based discipleship process to establish and maintain an ongoing lineage of disciples within the church as it fulfills the five purposes of the church: Worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry and missions.

The 3-Strand Church model is based on Jesus’ discipleship model (multitudes, the 12 and the three), expounded upon by John Wesley (society, class and bands) and what we now call the Crowd, cell and Core.

The 3-Strand Church model is used by congregations around the world , both large and small, denominational and non-denominational, new and established, inner-city and rural.

The 3-Strand model will assist you:

- Fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission
- Become intentional about discipleship
- Establish and preserve leadership through many generations

Tools: Bible, a Core workbook for each member, and a willingness to become a disciple of Jesus.

Time Requirement: 2 hours each week at minimum, from 12-52 weeks or until you are released by your CI to launch your own Core Group.

Application: each member should complete the following application for consideration as a

Core member.

A Three-Strand Cord - Crowd, Cell & Core

“One standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer; three is even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12)

From Acts 20:20; 2:41-47 and throughout Scripture we discover large groups (the crowds) tied to smaller group communities. Jesus taught the crowds, the 12, and especially, a smaller, more intimate group made up of Peter, James, and John – three strands of discipleship – crowds, cells, and the Core all interwoven and essential.

Core Discipleship Groups purpose to fulfill the Great Commandment and the Great Commission by focusing on the third-strand of the Great Commission: “Teach them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). We accomplish this purpose as we build lifelong relationships in the context of safe and confidential Core Groups - groups of no more than four disciples, men with men and women with women. Core Groups are not accountability groups or smaller, small groups. Core Groups develop men and women who commit their lives to Jesus Christ and are willing to follow Him as presented in the pages of God’s Word. From the very beginning, Core members are held accountable to begin praying for two to come to Christ and for someone they are called to disciple. The “handshake” of Core is fivefold:

1. Love:

Our first foundational value is the pursuit of love. Our pursuit is the fulfillment of the Great Commandment - our vertical relationship with God and our horizontal relationship with others (Mth. 22:37-40)

2. Christ-likeness:

Our second foundational value is the pursuit of Christ-likeness as we become His disciples (Mth. 28:19,20). It is our desire to be genuinely conformed to the character of Jesus. We believe this is God’s vision for man, to make us in the image of Christ (Gen 1:26; Rom 8:29). We believe that all spiritual progress is the result of God’s grace. We believe that humility is the pathway to Christ-likeness. In seeking to truly become like Christ, we remember His command to, “Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Mth. 11:29).

3. Devoted:

The third foundational value of Core is a commitment to the four fundamental devotions of the church as recorded in Acts 2:42: God’s Word, fellowship, communion, and prayer. It is learning to be a doer of the Word.

4. Equipped:

A Core Group outfits the saints for the work of ministry - a privilege and enterprise of each member of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16).

5. Faithful:

A Core Group follows Jesus’ pattern of discipleship and that Paul presented in 2 Timothy 2:2: “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

The Great Commission:

We take seriously the Great Commission recorded for us in Matthew 28:19-20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (bold mine).

The Great Commission has three participles: “going,” “baptizing,” and “teaching” and one imperative verb, a command: “make disciples.” The main idea is to make disciples. The participles tell us how to do that: we make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching. So the goal of a Core Discipleship Group is to make disciples, teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded.

What is a disciple?

A disciple is a born-again believer who has decided that following Christ takes priority over everything else in life. Jesus didn't say being a disciple would be easy. He told His followers that they would have to deny themselves, take up their own crosses, and follow Him. He emphasized the fact that He would have to be first in their lives when He said, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26). Jesus is speaking to you and to me. Being a disciple and making disciples is a direct command from our Lord Jesus and the responsibility of every born-again believer.

We are to commit our lives to Jesus Christ and be willing to do whatever Jesus tells us so that His kingdom will be built according to His plan. That's discipleship.

Did everyone who heard Jesus preach become His disciple? No. Whenever Jesus drew a large crowd to hear Him teach many departed because He told them about denying themselves, carrying their crosses, and putting Him first in their lives (John 6:66,67). There is no middle ground with Jesus.

Go

The first strand of Core disciple making is “go” out into the world to represent Christ to a lost and dying world. Nowhere in the Bible are we told to bring our non-Christian friends and co-workers into the church in the hope of winning them to Christ. We're told to go to them and be a witness where they are. A disciple's life becomes a living epistle.

Baptize

The second strand of Core disciple making is to baptize new believers “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The Greek word to “baptize” (baptizo) literally means to immerse, something we are familiar with; however, throughout the New Testament this term means, “to identify with someone or something.” This means that by placing faith in Christ we are identified with Him - identified with His death on the cross, and identified through His resurrection into newness of life.

When Jesus told all believers in the church age to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, He was commanding us to teach all those who become disciples that we are to think like Christ, our behavior is to be Christ-like.

Teach

The third Core strand found in Jesus' Commission is for us to, "Teach them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). Jesus taught His disciples how to live, and that is what He commands us to teach others - how to live.

The teaching that Jesus was talking about when He said teach them "to observe all that I commanded you" should change lives. A transformed life is when a disciple has surrendered their life to Christ.

The Promise

The last phrase of Matthew 28:20 contains an incredible promise: "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." In context, this verse is primarily talking about making disciples. What Jesus is saying is that when we make disciples He will be with us.

When God sees a disciple making church, He gets involved there. When He sees disciples going out to make new disciples, then baptizing and teaching them, He is very present. According to Romans 8:29, God wants disciples to be conformed to Christ's image, and according to His Commission, He promises to help us make disciples to accomplish His plan.

Core Discipleship Groups follow the Master's plan for discipleship by imparting life, not just teaching about life - it is spiritual parenting. It is showing, telling, supervising and releasing disciples to make disciples who can then repeat the process once more. It is both an adventure of a lifetime and a lifetime of adventure.

Core Group Member Application (Example for your use)

Please answer the following questions about yourself (please write clearly):

Name: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

Mobile: _____

Email Address: _____

Your marital status: Single Married If married, your spouse's name: _____

If you have children at home, please provide their names and ages: _____

How long have you lived in the area? _____

Are you a member of our church? Y N If so, how long have you been a member? _____

What activities or ministries are you involved in at our church? _____

Whose small group are you in and for how long? _____

Your employer? How long? _____

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? Y N If so, please explain: _____

Why do you want to be in a Core Group? _____

What are your expectations as a Core member candidate? _____

Please provide three personal references from our church regarding your life and ministry:

May we visit with your spouse and references if additional information is needed? Y N

Write a brief history of your relationship with Jesus Christ (your testimony):

"We proclaim him, admonishing
and teaching everyone with all
wisdom, so that we may present
everyone perfect in Christ"
(Colossians 1:28).

"God wants us to grow up, to know
the whole truth and tell it in love -
like Christ in everything"
(Ephesians 4:15, The Message).

"My dear children, for whom I am
again in the pains of childbirth until
Christ is formed in you"
(Galatians 4:19).

"If you hold to my teaching,
you are really my disciples"
(John 8:31).

Core Discipleship Group Covenant (Example for your use)

A covenant is a promise made to another in the presence of God. Its purpose is to indicate your intention to make yourself available to one another for the fulfillment of the Great Commandment and Great Commission.

1. The purpose of our Core Discipleship Group is to know God and make Him known.
2. Our goals will be to commit to God's Word, the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, fellowship, communion, prayer, one another, and for each member to begin praying for two unsaved people and one person to be discipled.
3. We will meet for _____ weeks.
4. We will meet from _____ to _____ and we will strive to start on time and end on time.
5. We will meet at _____ (place).
6. I agree to the following ground rules for our Core Discipleship Group:

- **Priority:** While I am in the Core, I will give the Group meetings priority
- **Participation:** Everyone is encouraged to participate and no one dominates (there is one called as facilitator, but no one has authority or position over the others – all are fellow participants – equality as fellow journeymen)
- **Respect:** Everyone has the right to his or her own opinion, and all questions will be encouraged and respected
- **Confidentiality:** Anything said in the meeting is not to be “shared” or repeated outside the meeting without the expressed consent of the other members in advance
- **Life Change:** We will regularly assess our own life change goals and encourage one another in our pursuit of the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and toward becoming Christ-like;
- **Evangelism:** I will pray for two unsaved people and for one whom I can begin discipling
- **Care & Support:** Permission is given to call upon each other at any time especially in times of crisis. The Group will provide care, safety, and God's love for each Core member
- **Accountability:** I agree to allow the Core Group members to hold me accountable to the commitments which each of us make in whatever Biblically loving ways we decide upon
- **Mission:** I will do everything in my power and as Spirit-led, to launch another Core Discipleship Group
- **Ministry:** The Core Discipleship Group will encourage one another to volunteer and serve in ministry, and to support the mission of our church, our church leadership and authority, and to support the church as led by His Holy Spirit in giving.

My Personal Covenant:

Having received Jesus Christ as my Lord, Master and Savior, believing that He, along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are One, and being in agreement with my local church mission, vision and values, I commit myself to Almighty God and to the following:

I realize God's ultimate goal for me is to make me like Christ (1 John 3:2). As I become more like Him, I will discover my true self, the person I was created to be. I desire to be conformed to Christ's likeness by reading and obeying God's Word, by studying Jesus' life on earth through the Gospels, by being filled with and daily walking in the fullness of the Holy Spirit, to my becoming a student, to be challenged to become spiritually mature, and by doing God's work in the world. I believe that Jesus commands me to tell others the Good News and that I must first be a disciple before I can make disciples of others for His Kingdom. As such, I agree with the terms of this covenant.

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Core FasTrak Training Evaluation (Example for your use)

This form gives you the opportunity to comment anonymously about your experience in the 12-week Core Discipleship training and how it was taught. Choose one response for each statement that is closest to your view.

(KEY: 4 = EXCELLENT 3 = ABOVE AVERAGE 2 = AVERAGE 1 = NOT GOOD
0 = TERRIBLE)

1. My instructor was clear in explaining requirements, assignments, and expectations:
4 3 2 1 0
2. My instructor was clear and understandable in communicating course content:
4 3 2 1 0
3. My instructor was effective in summarizing or emphasizing important points in class:
4 3 2 1 0
4. My instructor encouraged me to work cooperatively with others:
4 3 2 1 0
5. I would rate the overall 12-week training and purpose of Core as being:
4 3 2 1 0
6. I would rate my experience in Core as being:
4 3 2 1 0
7. I feel that I have a better understanding of what discipleship is according to the Jesus model:
4 3 2 1 0
8. I feel that I made progress toward becoming a more devoted disciple of Jesus:
4 3 2 1 0
9. The workload for this course was:
4 3 2 1 0
10. The course material was useful and easy to understand:
4 3 2 1 0
11. Classroom facilities and the learning environment were adequate for my experience:
4 3 2 1 0
12. My Core experience has influenced my relationship with Jesus Christ and others in these areas: _____

13. How can we improve the 12-week Core training experience? _____

Thank you for completing this survey. Your input is important for helping Core serve you and others in the best way possible!

Discipleship Dynamics: Spiritual Life Stages

As a means of introducing the concept of spiritual life stages as it relates to the Core Discipleship process and resources, the following is presented as a brief overview so that you can develop your discipleship process:

A. The Christian life (spiritual) parallels the physical life (natural):

- There are definite stages in life;
- Each stage of life in the Christian journey builds upon the other (precept upon precept);
- Just as there are natural parents, there should be spiritual parents;
- Only through “growth” does a person pass from one stage to the next;
- When growth does not occur, it is a sign of a serious problem.

B. There is a major difference between physical growth and spiritual growth:

- Physical growth usually takes place with little to no effort on our part;
- Spiritual growth must be nurtured and overseen by spiritually mature “fathers/mothers” who understand the process as being intentional, relational and that the process is 100 percent spiritual.

C. From the mature writings of the Apostle John:

- We discover several truths (1 John 2:12-14): “I write to you dear children ... young men ... fathers”

D. Spiritual Transformation:

- Simply leading people to Jesus and getting people to attend church regularly does not produce a spiritually mature disciple.
- Spiritual transformation is learned and imparted as believers walk together on the journey.
- Unlike 1 John 2:1,18,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21 where “children” appears to be a term of endearment for all believers, in 1 John 2:12,13 “children” seems to refer to a specific life-stage.
*Any distinction between “teknion” and “paidion” is likely not significant, since John uses both as terms of endearment in this epistle when speaking of all believers (1 John 2:18 paidion) with (1 John 2:28 teknion)
*Taken literally, the terms “fathers, children, young men” would leave out many disciples (old men, old and younger women); therefore, we take the terms to be figurative.

Core Discipleship Resource Chart

Three Stages of Spiritual Maturity: (1 John 2:12-14)

The Apostle John made reference to three stages of spiritual maturity (children, young men, fathers). Core resources have been developed and are provided based on John’s categories:

- In each stage there are blessings to be enjoyed and instruction/virtues to be realized and learned.
- Children need to become young men/young women, and young men/young women need to become fathers/mothers.

Core provides a variety of discipleship resources for all three stages. These resources are organized by a suggested spiritual-development plan – Beginnings/Children (knowledge); Intermediate/Students (character); and Seasoned/Adult (conduct). The purpose of these categories is to help you develop a balanced set of discipleship opportunities for your church family as part of your discipleship process.

A1-A9:

Children (regardless of age-level this category includes those just entering the journey of faith).

B1-B9:

Students (young sons and daughters in the faith - regardless of age-level this category includes those growing in the faith).

C1-C9:

Adults (fathers and mothers in the faith - those who are spiritually mature and who are reproducing like kind).

	CORE Manual C7	CORE Manual C8	CORE Manual C9	
Years 5+	CORE Leader's Guide C4	CORE Manual C5	CORE Manual C6	Adult
	Field Guide C1	Field Guide C2	Field Guide C3	
	Discipleship By Design: 4 B7	Discipleship By Design: 5 B8	As A Man Thinks B9	
Years 2-4	Discipleship By Design: 1 B4	Discipleship By Design: 2 B5	Discipleship By Design: 3 B6	Student
	God's Order For Family Life B1	God's Order For Family Life B2	God's Order For Family Life B3	
	Presence A7	Foundations A8	Foundations A9	
Years 1-3	Disciple's Journal A4	Disciple's Journal A5	Disciple's Journal A6	Children
	Chrysalis A1	21 Days To Breakthrough A2	Discovering God's Will A3	
	Begin With CORE Discipleship Guide As The Foundation			

- **Seasoned: (C1-C9 Series) - Spiritual "Adult"**
- **Intermediate: (B1-B9 Series) - Spiritual "Student"**
- **Beginnings: (A1-A9 Series) - Spiritual "Children"**

Beginnings - “Children”

Spiritual Age: Children in the faith – those just entering into the journey

Spiritual Needs: nurturing, nourishment, protection, love, basic training

Discipler’s Role: Spiritual “father/mother” in the faith (see 1 Thess. 2:7)

Suggested Core Resources: A1-A9

Overview:

The primary needs of a new believer are nurturing, nourishment, protection, love and fundamentals. New believers need to be greatly loved and protected from the enemy, encouraged, guided, and confirmed. They need to learn that they are a part of God’s family (Eph. 2:19). They need to learn how to hear, know and do God’s Word. At this stage, the primary role of a discipler is that of a spiritual “father/mother,” (not gender specific) who tenderly and gently meet their needs just as the apostle Paul did: “but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.” (1 Thess. 2:7)

A. At this stage, disciples are “little children” in Christ Jesus

1. There are two terms used by John referring to small infants
 - teknion {tek-nee'-on} - diminutive of tekna; an infant
 - paidion {pahee-dee'-on} - neut. diminutive of pais; a childling (of either sex), i.e. (prop.) an infant, or (by extens.) a half-grown boy or girl (cf. Mark 5:39-42)
2. Those who are new Christians, or immature Christians, are spoken of as “babes in Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:1; Galatians 4:19; Hebrews 5:12-13)
 - Knowledge: learn and love God’s Word
 - Begin to learn to live godly lives and grow as believers
 - Begin to learn how to lead in the next generation
3. This can be a difficult time, in which a disciple:
 - Is still more carnal than spiritual (1 Corinthians 3:1)
 - Can be a source of anxiety for those trying to example and lead them toward Christ-likeness (Galatians 4:19)
 - Instruction should focus on the “milk” of the Word (Hebrews 5:12-13)

B. Disciples At This Stage Need Much Encouragement And Reminders:

1. They must be instructed frequently so that they fully grasp that their sins have been forgiven in Christ (1 John 2:12)
 - They must be instructed and fully grasp that forgiveness is not based upon maturity or perfection
 - They must be instructed and fully grasp that forgiveness is based upon the blood of Jesus, and upon a willingness to confess sins (1 John 1:9); holiness and grace must be taught
2. Because they have “known the Father” (1 John 2:13)
 - They must understand that they have fellowship with the Father, which is John’s definition of “eternal life” (John 17:2-3)
 - They must recognize that though they may be “babes”, they have “eternal life” in Christ (1 John 5:11-12)

- They must understand that God wants them to continue to believe and grow (1 John 5:13)

Recommended Core Materials: Spiritual Children (Year 1)

- **Chrysalis - New Believer's Guidebook:** This book contains the basic teaching every new believer should know. If you're a new Christian, coming back to Christ after a period of doubt, trying to process the "big picture" or just need a refresher course, this guidebook will help you get started.
- **21 Days To Breakthrough:** will help disciples understand that the habits we form, the sin we embrace, the forces we struggle against, are very real and can be overcome because they have been defeated by Jesus at Calvary.
- **Discovering God's Will:** provides seven keys to discovering God's will - following these keys will bring assurance and confidence as disciples make major life decisions.
- **Presence: The Practice Of The Presence Of God:** Written 300 years ago by a cook in a European monastery, this is one of the most famous Christian books of all time and will help disciples practice being and remaining in God's presence continuously.
- **The Disciple's Journal:** through-the-year study contains individual weekly character/virtue studies, a daily journaling area, a weekly note page for sermon/lesson notes, and weekly words of wisdom from the Bible ... all in one book! Each week a character trait of Jesus is provided such as: Perseverance, Patience, Courage, Friendliness, Forgiveness, Honesty, Dependability, and 45 additional weekly studies.

NOTE: The Disciple's Journal can be used simultaneously beginning with Chrysalis and then followed by 21 Days To Breakthrough, Discovering God's Will and Presence over the first year.

Recommended Core Materials: Spiritual Children (Years 2-3)

- **Foundations - Essentials Of Our Faith:** The foundational doctrines presented in this study are from Hebrews 6:1-3. Just as is true of any good foundation, these must be established first, and then built upon. These principles include: Repentance From Dead Works, Faith Toward God, The Doctrine Of Baptisms, Laying On Of Hands, The Resurrection Of The Dead, Eternal Judgment and a section on Maturity.

When a "babe in Christ" is fed the milk of the Word, learns to stand on the power of the blood of Christ, learns to remain in fellowship with the Father and sharing in "eternal life", and as they begin to grasp the holiness and grace of God they will soon enter into the next stage.

Intermediate - “Students”

Spiritual Age: Young sons/daughters in the faith – “Students”

Spiritual Needs: growing in the faith

Discipler’s Role: Teacher/Coach

Suggested Core Resources: B1-B9

Overview:

As a student begins to grow in his/her faith, their needs change, too. At this spiritual life stage, the student must learn to recognize and respond to the Lordship of Jesus, develop and demonstrate Christ’s character, and develop godly relationships. A discipler must provide continuous, firm guidance and teach the basics of how to walk. More is required of the student with added responsibility and accountability. It is at this stage that the foundational principles of the spiritual life are modeled and taught (see Heb. 6:1-3). It is at this stage that the discipler’s role becomes that of “teacher/coach.” As growth continues, the student begins to stand and it is easy for the discipler to fall back into the role of “father/mother” whereas the student needs a “teacher/coach.” The student needs to fully understand that they have the same opportunity for success and failure and that there are rewards and consequences for each attitude and action. As the student is assigned more responsibility, more accountability is given with more authority provided. In other words, the student is now “in the game” and the discipler is on the sidelines, cheering, guiding, and patching up skinned elbows, knees, and hearts as need be.

A. At this stage, disciples are “young men”

1. The expression “young men” is taken figuratively
2. Young men refers to all, male or female, young or old chronologically, who are “strong in the Lord”
3. Those who are “strong in the Lord” are those “who have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:13,14)
 - At this stage, disciples must be taught and come to understand that they are not perfect nor without sin (1 John 1:8)
 - These disciples must be taught that their faith must and will be tested; they have demonstrated that they are truly “born of God” (1 John 4:4; 5:4-5)

B. Disciples at this point must be taught and understand that the source of their strength is the Word of God

1. They must be taught and realize that only as the Word of God “abides” in them are they strong (1 John 2:14)
2. They must be taught and realize the strength of God’s Word as David saw the value of allowing the Word of God to abide in his heart (Psalm 119:11)
3. They need to heed the admonition found in 1 Peter 2:1,2.
 - Disciplines include: Lordship, disciplines in the faith, character, discernment, relationships, and influence

Recommended Core Materials: Spiritual Students (Years 2-4)

- **God’s Order For FamilyLife:** will help the disciple discover and recover the pattern of godly relationships in the home and with our loving Father God.
- **Discipleship By Design: Book I “The Holy Spirit Filled Life”:** The Bible tells us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This introductory study will show a disciple how we are to

walk and presents a clear understanding between our soul's response and our Spirit-to-spirit response.

- **Discipleship By Design: Book 2 “Discovering Your Holy Spirit Filled Life”:** Book 2 shows us how we can daily live under the Holy Spirit's control and guidance, obeying every prompting of the Holy Spirit, knowing that it is by this means that the fleshly or carnal desires are defeated. This speaks of relational discipleship.
- **Discipleship By Design: Book 3 “Growing In Your Holy Spirit Filled Life”:** Book 3 will help you understand and apply the Great Commission using the model the Apostle Paul established for the preservation and transmission of the gospel.
- **Discipleship By Design: Book 4 “Serving In Your Holy Spirit Filled Life”:** Book 4 will help you discover that godliness results only from Jesus Christ living through us by the Holy Spirit. It can never be accomplished by any external means.
- **Discipleship By Design: Book 5 “Sharing In Your Holy Spirit Filled Life”:** Book 5 will help you become the kind of person who understands that discipleship means the total renunciation of all selfish interests for the sake of Jesus Christ. It is a total commitment to Him and Him alone and a maximum realization of His life lived through us.
- **As A Man Thinks:** Few books have been so widely read, have stood the test of time, have had such an impact on generations of readers, and have carried such a simple, profound message based on the admonition found in Romans 12:1,2.

As a disciple demonstrates repeatedly that they are strong in the Lord, they progress to the final stage of the disciple's life.

Seasoned - “Adults”

Spiritual Age: Spiritually mature; reproducing like kind

Spiritual Needs: abiding, praying, serving, discipling

Discipler’s Role: Friend/Partner

Suggested Core Resources: C1-C9

Overview:

It is at this spiritual life stage that the discipler’s role is that of “friend/partner.” The disciple has grown and is now ready to launch out from under your “spiritual roof”. They are now fellowshiping with believers, praying in faith, living in the Word, abiding in Christ, ministering to others, and witnessing to the world. It is at this stage that the discipler needs to release the disciple to develop his/her faith, not yours, and this will sometimes be painful as they learn firsthand the reality and harshness of life (natural and spiritual), the flesh, and the tactics of the enemy. The discipler will have the tendency to rush in and save the disciple, but this is counterproductive. Just as a caterpillar must be allowed to struggle to gain freedom from its cocoon, if assisted, it will not have the strength necessary for life’s battles. Encourage the disciple to deepen their walk, increase their faith, practice the presence of God, and produce lasting fruit. As their friend/partner, you are now shouting: “You can do it! Don’t give up! Keep the pace! Finish the race!”

A. Disciples are now “fathers”

1. This term is used figuratively
2. This term refers to disciples, male and female, who are recognized as Christ-like (love/servanthood) and who are in the process or are making disciples
3. This stage suggests:
 - They have experience, having progressed through earlier stages of the Christian life (infancy, strength)
 - They are or are in the process of making disciples - going, baptizing, teaching others all that Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:19,20; 1 Corinthians 4:14-15)
 - They are abiding in Christ, praying in faith, living in the Word, fellowship with believers, minister to others, and witnessing to the world.

B. Disciples at this stage continue developing, reproducing, and bearing lasting fruit

1. They “walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6)
 - They purpose to “grow in the...knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18)
 - They realize that this knowledge comes only as they develop the Christ-like graces found in (2 Peter 1:5-8)

Recommended Core Materials: Spiritual Adults (Years 5-9)

- **Field Guide: Charting A Course For Today’s Discipleship Groups:** This book presents a general overview of discipleship and includes the six elementary doctrinal points presented in Hebrews 6:1-3.
- **Core Discipleship Launch & Leader’s Guide:** this guide serves as the companion piece for the Core Manual. This guide presents the 3-Strand Church Discipleship Model, the Core process, and prepares you as you intentionally invest your life in the lives of a few other

people. It is all about spiritual parenting.

• **Core Discipleship Group Manual:** The manual contains a comprehensive presentation of what is expected of those who call themselves “disciples” and a series of practical lessons to help develop strong and obedient believers. Each Core Member will be challenged to reach out and begin praying for two converts and for their own disciple, will develop and write-out their personal testimony, be challenged and trained to launch their own Core Group, and learn to effectively present the Gospel message to the lost.


I pray that you and your church will consider implementing the 3-Strand Discipleship Process. I hope you have found this simple presentation of the process, steps, tools and resources of some value. May our Lord Jesus bless you as you purpose to fulfill the Great Commandment and Great Commission.

Please visit our website for even more information, articles, free studies, and to download our discipleship materials (the majority of our discipleship resources are available as free downloads and you can print and make up to 100 copies of our free resources and 50 copies each of our paid materials).

May God grant that we become His disciples by His grace,

Doug & Suzie Morrell
Founders/Directors
CORE Discipleship

CoreDiscipleship.com



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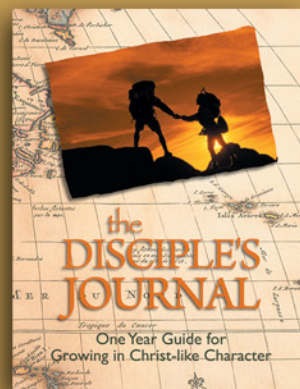
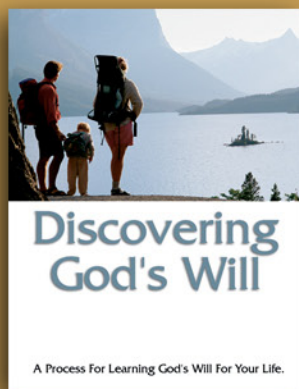
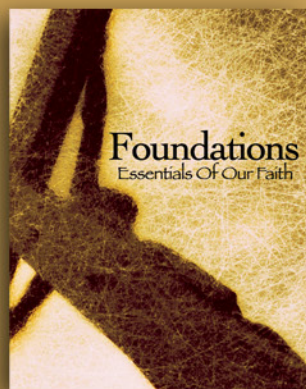
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CORE Discipleship is a faith-based, Christian organization. Our mission is to help you make disciples of Jesus. We provide a simple and reproducible discipleship process based on Jesus' "inner circle" or "core" comprised of Peter, James, and John. We also provide discipleship training and discipleship resources available as free downloadable eBooks. CORE is a Biblical process that can help develop an unbelievable spiritual discipleship community where no one stands alone, struggles alone, develops alone or grows up alone.

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