Leader's Notes for

GROW

FRUITFUL

DISCIPLE SERIES

ABIDING IN CHRIST. BEARING FRUIT.

BECOMING A FRUITFUL DISCIPLE

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GROW: Becoming a Fruitful Disciple Leader's Notes

Thank you for your willingness to lead others through GROW! My hope is that as you work through this book together, participants will not only gain a greater understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, but will also take meaningful steps toward becoming more fruitful in their walk with Him.

Preparing for Each Meeting
Before each meeting, read the assigned chapter and complete the Take Your Next Steps questions yourself. Review the corresponding Leader's Notes, paying particular attention to the Key Take-Aways and Looking Forward sections. These will help you identify the important truths and applications to emphasize during your discussion.

Leading the Discussion
The primary purpose of your meeting is not to re-teach the chapter, but to help participants discuss what they've learned and consider how to apply it to their lives. Since participants have already read the chapter and answered the questions, spend most of your time discussing their responses.

You don't need to discuss every question or have every participant answer each one aloud. In fact, trying to do so could easily consume your entire meeting! Focus on the questions that generate the most meaningful discussion, and encourage participants to interact with one another rather than directing every response to you.

The Leader's Notes are organized into five sections:

Looking Back: Begin with prayer and, after the first meeting, briefly review commitments made the previous week.
Looking Together: Discuss the *Take Your Next Steps* questions, using the suggested prompts to guide the conversation.
Key Take-Aways: Keep these important truths in mind as you lead. They are not intended to be another lesson, but rather points to reinforce during the discussion.
Looking Forward: Encourage each participant to identify a specific action step and complete the statement, "This week my commitment is..." Invite participants to share their commitments as appropriate.
Scripture Memory Verses: Encourage participants to memorize the suggested passages. Take a few minutes during subsequent meetings to review them together.

Helping Participants Grow
Remember that spiritual growth is a process. Some participants may be eager to share, while others may be hesitant. Encourage honest discussion, listen carefully, and create an environment where people feel comfortable sharing both their victories and struggles.

Most importantly, help participants move from understanding biblical truth to putting it into practice. A meaningful discussion is valuable, but our goal is to see God's Word increasingly shape how we live.

Thank you again for investing in the spiritual growth of others. My prayer is that God will use your leadership to help each participant become a more fruitful disciple of Jesus!

On Becoming a Disciple Leader's Notes

Introductory Paragraph
In starting out this book, I have tried to give the reader an understanding of the difference between a Christian and a disciple of Jesus. Whatever you can do to facilitate this discussion will be helpful. The purpose is to start well and to set the stage for the rest of the book. I am pretty sure that many of your participants have not thought much about the difference between the two terms, and as we see throughout the New Testament, Jesus wants us to become His fully devoted followers.

Looking Back
Welcome participants and open with prayer. Briefly explain that the purpose of these meetings is not simply to gain biblical knowledge, but to encourage one another to become more fruitful disciples of Jesus.

Looking Together
Begin discussing the Take Your Next Steps questions participants have already answered. Encourage them to share their responses and interact with one another.

As you lead the discussion, consider emphasizing these questions:
- What does it really mean to be a disciple of Jesus?
- Is there a difference between being a Christian and living as a devoted disciple of Jesus?
- What might keep a Christian from growing into a more fully devoted follower of Christ?

Key Take-Aways
- Every Christian should desire to become a devoted disciple of Jesus.
- Becoming a fruitful disciple involves intentional spiritual growth, obedience, and an ongoing relationship with Christ.
- Growing as a disciple takes time and effort, but the result is a deeper relationship with Jesus and a life that brings glory to God.

Looking Forward
Encourage participants to identify one area of their lives where they particularly need to grow as disciples of Jesus. Have them complete the statement in their books: This week my commitment is...

Invite several participants to share their commitments, then close by praying for one another.

Scripture Memory Verses
Mark 1:17
2 Corinthians 13:5

First Mark: Identified with Christ Leader's Notes

Introductory Paragraph
As we start with the first of the Marks of a Disciple of Jesus, we start with a big one: A disciple of Jesus has fully identified with Jesus and will openly admit that he or she belongs to Christ. This chapter begins to develop what will become a theme for the book: Jesus wants us as His disciples to renounce all for Him.
The question of who is on the throne is an important one for this chapter!

As we really understand what Jesus has done for us, what that finished work on the Cross means in terms of our identity, and how we can then live out our lives fully sold out for Him, we learn what it means to be fully identified as a disciple of Jesus.

Looking Back
Begin with prayer and briefly review last week's commitments. Invite participants to share how they are growing in their understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Looking Together
Discuss the Take Your Next Steps questions participants have already answered. Encourage honest reflection about what it means to identify openly and wholeheartedly with Christ.

As you lead the discussion, consider emphasizing these questions:
- What does it mean to be fully identified with Christ in our everyday lives?
- What fears or obstacles might keep us from openly identifying ourselves as followers of Jesus?
- Are there areas of our lives where we are still holding on to control rather than surrendering fully to Christ?

Key Take-Aways
- Our identity in Christ is rooted in what Jesus accomplished for us through His death and resurrection.
- A disciple of Jesus should not be ashamed to identify openly with Him, regardless of the circumstances.
- Fully identifying with Christ means surrendering control of our lives to Him and living in a way that reflects our commitment to follow Him.

Looking Forward
Challenge participants to identify one area where they need to more fully identify with Christ, whether through their words, actions, relationships, or personal priorities. Encourage them to make a specific commitment for the coming week and share it with someone who can help hold them accountable.

Close by praying for boldness, faithfulness, and a willingness to surrender every area of life to Christ.

Scripture Memory Verses
Romans 1:16
Philippians 3:7–9

Second Mark: Supreme Love for Jesus Leader's Notes

Introductory Paragraph
To say that a disciple of Jesus has a supreme love for Jesus should not be a revolutionary concept, but in our battle with our own sin, it is true that placing Jesus in the first place in our lives takes deliberate effort. In your group discussion, determining who Jesus is (liar, lunatic, or Lord), recalling what He has done in each of our lives, and then rearranging our priorities to reflect the determinations we've made are great first strides toward having a supreme love for Jesus.

Looking Back
Begin with prayer and briefly review last week's commitments. Invite participants to share any opportunities they had to identify openly with Christ, along with any challenges they encountered.

Looking Together
Discuss the Take Your Next Steps questions participants have already answered. Encourage honest reflection about what it means to love Jesus above everything else.

As you lead the discussion, consider emphasizing these questions:
- What does it mean practically to love Jesus more than anything or anyone else?
- How do our daily priorities reveal what we truly love most?
- What competing desires or distractions might be keeping Jesus from having first place in our lives?

Key Take-Aways
- Jesus calls His disciples to love Him above everything else.
- Our love for Jesus should be reflected in our priorities, decisions, and daily actions.
- Growing in our love for Christ involves remembering who He is, what He has done for us, and responding with wholehearted devotion.

Looking Forward
Challenge participants to examine their priorities and identify one specific change they can make this week to demonstrate a greater love for Jesus. Encourage them to record their commitment in their books and share it with someone who can help hold them accountable.

Close by praying that each participant would grow in a sincere, wholehearted, and enduring love for Christ.

Scripture Memory Verses
Matthew 22:37–40
Galatians 2:20

Third Mark: Obedient to the Bible Leader's Notes

Introductory Paragraph

In this chapter, I hope to make a case for the Bible: that it is worth our time to read, to study, and to obey. Far too many of us treat the Bible as a book to peruse from time to time. In reality, it is the very Word of God! If we want to know Him, the Bible is the primary means for us to do so. Some of the participants in your group may not have settled the matter of the Bible being the inspired Word of God with 100% certainty. Much of your conversation can be directed toward this area as you walk through the points I have made to show that the Bible is reliable and that it stands up to the tests we can use to evaluate its reliability.

Looking Back

Begin with prayer and briefly review last week's commitments. Invite participants to share how they sought to make Jesus their highest priority during the past week and what they learned through that experience.

Looking Together

Discuss the Take Your Next Steps questions participants have already answered. Encourage honest reflection about their confidence in Scripture and their willingness to submit to its authority.

As you lead the discussion, consider emphasizing these questions:

- Why is it important to be convinced that the Bible is the inspired and trustworthy Word of God?
- What does our current practice of reading and studying Scripture reveal about the priority we place on God's Word?
- Are there areas of our lives where we know what Scripture teaches but struggle to obey it?

Key Take-Aways

- The Bible is the inspired, reliable Word of God and the authority for what we believe and how we live.
- Growing as a disciple of Jesus requires regularly reading, studying, and meditating on Scripture.
- Knowing God's Word is not enough. A fruitful disciple seeks to obey and apply its teachings in everyday life.

Looking Forward

Challenge participants to identify one specific way they can strengthen their commitment to God's Word this week. This might include establishing a daily Bible reading plan, memorizing Scripture, or taking a concrete step of obedience in an area where God has been convicting them.

Encourage participants to record their commitments and share them with someone who can help hold them accountable. Close by praying for a growing love for God's Word and a willingness to obey it.

Scripture Memory Verses

2 Timothy 3:16–17

Joshua 1:8

Fourth Mark: Deny Yourself Daily Leader's Notes

Introductory Paragraph
This is probably the hardest of the Marks of a Disciple that I have written about in the book. We are so sinful and want our own way so deeply that to "deny ourselves and take up our cross daily" is hard. I mess up at this all the time! To fully surrender and have total buy-in to Jesus goes against almost everything we actually want to do! My prayer for your group is that, as a group, you all would determine to help each other deny yourselves and take up your crosses daily, making a group plan to do this well.

Looking Back
Begin with prayer and briefly review last week's commitments. Invite participants to share how they sought to grow in their obedience to God's Word and what challenges they encountered.

Looking Together
Discuss the Take Your Next Steps questions participants have already answered. Encourage honest reflection about the daily challenges of denying ourselves and following Jesus.

As you lead the discussion, consider emphasizing these questions:
- What does denying ourselves and taking up our cross daily look like in practical, everyday situations?
- Why is it often so difficult to surrender our own desires and plans to Christ?
- In what areas of our lives are we most tempted to put our own interests ahead of what Jesus calls us to do?

Key Take-Aways
- Jesus calls His disciples to deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow Him.
- Denying ourselves means surrendering our own desires and priorities whenever they conflict with God's will.
- Following Jesus requires daily dependence on Him and a willingness to obey, even when doing so is difficult or costly.

Looking Forward
Challenge participants to identify one area of their lives where they need to surrender their own desires or priorities to Christ. Encourage them to make a specific commitment to practice self-denial in that area during the coming week.

Invite participants to share their commitments and consider how they can encourage and pray for one another. Close by asking God to give each person the humility, strength, and willingness to follow Jesus faithfully each day.

Scripture Memory Verses
Luke 9:23–25
Luke 14:26–27

Fifth Mark: Filled with Love for Others Leader's Notes

Introductory Paragraph

I think you'll find that one of the key thoughts here is that the way we love each other as Christians has a direct impact on our testimony about Christ to the non-Christian world. I believe that if we as Christians can love each other well, with an unconditional, sacrificial love, full of forgiveness and grace, we truly would be the aroma of Christ to those around us. Jesus Himself states that this is one of the ways that people know that we are his disciples: if we love each other well.

In leading your participants through this chapter, may I refer you to Peacemakers Ministries and their Peacemakers Pledge. 'A peacemaker is a person that has chosen to engage in relational disputes with health and purpose from a Gospel perspective. They seek to work through healthy tension, rather than cause unhealthy conflict between them and others involved. They do this by reflecting on God's Word, listening to others, considering other perspectives, taking responsibility for their actions, and committing to healthy reconciliation between them and the other person. Their goals are to deepen the relationship and to grow it through effective communication.'

Resolving conflict well is a key to obedience in our commitment to have a deep, sincere love for brothers and sisters in Christ.

Looking Back

Begin with prayer and briefly review last week's commitments. Invite participants to share how they practiced denying themselves and putting Christ's priorities ahead of their own during the past week.

Looking Together

Discuss the Take Your Next Steps questions participants have already answered. Encourage honest reflection about how well they are demonstrating Christlike love in their relationships.

As you lead the discussion, consider emphasizing these questions:

- How does the way we treat other Christians affect our testimony to those who do not know Christ?
- What makes it difficult to love others with the same sacrificial and forgiving love that Jesus has shown us?
- Are there relationships in our lives where unresolved conflict, resentment, or a lack of forgiveness may be preventing us from loving others as Christ commands?

Key Take-Aways

- Jesus commands His disciples to love one another as He has loved us, and this love is a distinguishing mark of His followers.
- Christlike love involves humility, sacrifice, forgiveness, and a willingness to put the needs of others ahead of our own.
- Pursuing biblical reconciliation and resolving conflicts in a Christ-honoring way are important expressions of our love for one another.

Looking Forward

Challenge participants to identify one relationship where they can demonstrate greater Christlike love during the coming week. This might involve extending forgiveness, seeking reconciliation, serving someone sacrificially, or taking the initiative to encourage another person.

Encourage participants to record a specific commitment in their books and pray for the humility, grace, and courage to follow through. Close by praying that their love for one another would be a compelling testimony of Christ to those around them.

Scripture Memory Verses

John 13:34–35
Ephesians 4:32

Sixth Mark: Fruitful for Christ Leader's Notes

Introductory Paragraph
This is one of my favorite chapters in the book, because there may not be a clearer Mark of a Disciple of Jesus than being fruitful for Christ. Jesus' admonition in Matthew 7 is clear: "Every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits."

A common experience in going through this chapter is that if one does not think they are bearing much fruit in their relationship with God, they can feel inadequate. Be sure to emphasize that rather than feeling inadequate, a Christ-follower can use this Mark to evaluate where they are in their relationship with Jesus and identify opportunities for spiritual growth.

Looking Back
Begin with prayer and briefly review last week's commitments. Invite participants to share how they sought to demonstrate greater Christlike love toward others and what they learned through those experiences.

Looking Together
Discuss the Take Your Next Steps questions participants have already answered. Encourage participants to reflect on the spiritual fruit being produced in their lives and how abiding in Christ contributes to that fruitfulness.

As you lead the discussion, consider emphasizing these questions:
- What does spiritual fruitfulness look like in the everyday life of a disciple of Jesus?
- How does abiding in Christ lead to bearing spiritual fruit, and what might hinder that process?
- In what areas of your life do you see evidence of spiritual fruit, and where would you like to see greater growth?

Key Take-Aways
- Jesus calls His disciples to bear spiritual fruit, bringing glory to God and demonstrating that they belong to Him.
- Spiritual fruitfulness flows from abiding in Christ and maintaining a close, dependent relationship with Him.
- Unconfessed sin, competing priorities, and a lack of spiritual discipline can hinder fruitfulness in our lives.

Looking Forward
Challenge participants to identify one area where they desire to become more fruitful for Christ. Encourage them to consider what might be hindering their growth and identify a specific step they can take this week to deepen their relationship with Jesus or serve others more effectively.
Invite participants to share their commitments and encourage them to pray for one another's spiritual growth. Close by asking God to produce lasting fruit in each person's life as they continue to abide in Christ.

Scripture Memory Verses
Galatians 5:22–23

Section 2
Seven Practices of a Fruitful Christian Leader's Notes

This is a very different part of the book from Section 1. As you worked through the Six Marks of a Disciple, everyone participating in the study had a chapter to read and Take Your Next Steps questions to answer. Section 2 is a Personal Spiritual Growth Assessment. Each of the Seven Practices of a Fruitful Christian begins with a few introductory paragraphs explaining the practice, followed by five sections that invite participants to study Scripture, reflect on what they're learning, assess their own spiritual lives, and identify areas for growth.

Let me walk you through each of these five tools so you'll know how to help your participants get the most benefit from each practice.

1. Bible Study on This Practice
After reading the introductory paragraphs, participants will find four Bible passages related to the practice being studied. Encourage everyone to read and study these passages before your meeting. During your discussion, ask what they learned from Scripture and how those truths relate to their lives.

2. Reflect on What You're Reading
This section gives participants an opportunity to reflect on each Scripture passage and write down their observations beneath the reference. During your meeting, invite them to share what stood out to them and what God may be teaching them through His Word.

3. Personal Assessment
Here, participants evaluate a series of statements about the practice being studied. They'll rate how true each statement is in their own lives on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being least true and 5 being most true, and briefly explain their ratings.

Encourage participants to be honest in their assessments. The purpose isn't to achieve a high score, but to identify areas where spiritual growth is needed. Remember that some participants may not feel comfortable sharing their ratings with the group, and that's perfectly fine.

4. Reflection Questions
These questions help participants think more deeply about their assessments and identify opportunities for growth. As you lead the discussion, encourage them to share what they've discovered about themselves and where they believe they need to grow.

5. Next Steps for Growth
This final section provides suggested steps participants can take to grow in each practice. As the leader, this is an especially important opportunity for you to help them identify practical ways to move forward.

Ask which suggested steps would be most helpful and whether anyone needs assistance getting started. Some participants may need encouragement or practical guidance in areas such as developing a Bible

reading plan, establishing a consistent prayer time, or learning how to share the gospel.

Encourage each participant to choose a specific step to work on during the coming week, and follow up on those commitments at your next meeting.

A Final Word About Leading These Discussions

As you work through the Seven Practices, remember that the goal isn't simply to complete an assessment. It's to help participants grow in their relationship with Jesus and become more fruitful disciples.

Allow plenty of time for discussion, encourage honesty, and be sensitive to those who may be struggling in particular areas. You don't need to discuss every assessment statement or reflection question. Focus on the areas that will be most helpful to your group.

Above all, encourage participants to put what they're learning into practice. The real value of this assessment will be seen in the spiritual growth that follows!