

Leader's Guide

for

***Thoroughly Equipped:
A Disciple-Making Curriculum (DC)***

by

Kurt Sauder

and

D. Eric Schansberg

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Purpose of the Leader's Guide

The purpose of this Leader's Guide is to prepare you to handle the *administrative details of running a DC group* and to provide some assistance in *discussing the DC material*. You will save yourself a lot of headaches—and improve your DC'ers experience—by *reading it thoroughly, marking it up, and reviewing it early-on*. If you have further questions or suggestions on how to improve the Leader's Guide, please feel free to contact Eric at dschansb@ius.edu. For more information on DC, check out: <http://www.thoroughlyequipped.org/>

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* *Email Eric at DSchansb@ius.edu for info if you want help with setting this up.*

An Overview of *Thoroughly Equipped: A Disciple-Making Curriculum (DC)*

Thoroughly Equipped: A Disciple-Making Curriculum (DC) is...

- a 21-month program of Bible study, Bible reading, and Bible memorization
- a sequence of seven “semesters”—from DC101’s foundations to DC403’s concluding topics—with Bible reading and smaller group meetings during three “semester breaks”
- a *guided self-study* through material designed to enhance one’s walk with Christ and empower one to be a more effective leader within the kingdom of God
- intended to be facilitated by co-leaders who will get DC’ers to talk about the same amount
- what Kurt and I would teach and do with a group over a 21-month period in order to disciple them toward effective lay-leadership—with the intent to equip them so that they would become disciple-makers
- a systematic walk through a set of topics, skills, and experiences that will encourage you to become a more effective apprentice of Christ—a program to transform how you see God and how others see Christ in you, rather than simply a set of good lessons or a good Bible course
- quite useful for discipleship, but probably best understood as a tool for lay-leadership development in the Church and for the local church; we hope to develop competence and confidence (appropriately—and in the Spirit) and to promote a vision of living in God’s Kingdom
- The only pre-requisites for DC are a hunger to walk with Christ, an availability to attend weekly meetings, and a willingness and ability to do about 4-5 hours of “homework” per week.
- We ask DC’ers to sign a covenant, committing (only) to DC101—the first ten-week semester.
- Different people get different things out of DC, depending on where they are in their walk with Christ.

An Overview of the Material (cont'd)

-Two of our goals with DC are to develop leaders and to multiply disciples. Along with the work of Holy Spirit, DC empowers and equips people to do (more effective) ministry of various sorts. Some people who complete DC take the opportunity to co-lead their own groups through the same material—really learning it and developing shepherd/deacon skills by shepherding their own flock.

-We've reduced the six seven semesters to four books (\$20 for DC101; \$25 for DC201/202, DC301/401, and DC402/403.) The other books required for the course should cost about \$70. Consider ordering them in bulk well ahead of time from CBD or Amazon—to save money AND to avoid trouble in individual DC'ers obtaining them.

-Each semester of DC is 9-12 weeks in length—and, at least ideally, should be completed in the proper order. The curriculum was designed to start in September of year 1 and finish in May of year 3, but could be easily modified to fit another schedule. [For example, one could go from January of year 1 through August of year 2—with semester breaks after DC101 (early March to mid-April), DC202 (early August to mid-September), DC301 (early December to mid-January), and DC401 (mid-March to late-April).] Likewise, shuffling within the 200-level and 400-level semesters would not be a great loss in terms of building appropriate foundations. But it would wreak havoc with the review memory verses we've listed and cause other problems.

An Overview of the Bible Memory, Bible Reading, and Bible Study

- 1.) *Bible Memory*: Over the 21 months, DC'ers will memorize at least 70 verses.
- 2.) *Bible Reading*: Over the first nine months, DC'ers will read all of the New Testament, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon—as well as a significant sampling of the Psalms. On average, they will read about 12 chapters per week, with weekly reading in Proverbs. In the final 12 months, the group will read the rest of the Old Testament at a slightly faster pace, with weekly readings out of Psalms. During the three semester “breaks”, the group will read and do light studies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah.
- 3.) *Bible Study* (*see: table of contents of weekly topics in front cover of the DC books*):
 - a.) DC101: The Foundation—basic doctrine and Bible study tools
 - b.) DC201-202: Building on the Foundation—standard applications
 - c.) DC301: An Intro to Building Leaders—a more intimate look inside the heart, building the heart and skills of a teacher
 - d.) DC401-403: Building Leaders—deeper applications, thornier doctrinal issues

4.) *Required extra-biblical readings:*

- Discipleship Journal* articles included weekly in DC101-202 and sporadically after that—to supplement the Bible study portion of that week’s study
- articles from other publications on occasion—again, to supplement the Bible study topic for that week
- The Saving Life of Christ* by Ian Thomas (in DC101 and DC301)
- Inside Out* by Larry Crabb (DC301; ISBN #157683029)
- Teaching to Change Lives* by Howard Hendricks (DC301)
- Across the Spectrum* by Gregory Boyd and Paul Eddy (various topics throughout the DC400-level material)
- Unmasking the Cults* by Alan Gomes (DC401—on Cults of Christianity)
- Christian History Made Easy* by Timothy Paul Jones (DC402—on Christian History)

5.) *Optional/supplemental extra-biblical readings:*

- The NIV Exhaustive Concordance* by Goodrick and Kohlenberger (quite useful for word studies—starting in DC101 and continuing throughout)
- The Normal Christian Life* by Watchman Nee (supplements our week on Romans in DC202)
- Inheriting Our Promised Land* by Eric Schansberg (supplements our reading of Joshua in DC301)
- Turn Neither to the Right nor to the Left: A Thinking Christian’s Guide to Politics and Public Policy* by Eric Schansberg (to supplement a DC401 lesson on Christians and government)
- Handbook of Denominations in the United States* by Mead et. al. or *Pocket Dictionary of North American Denominations*, ed. Blankman and Augustine (as a useful resource for false religions in DC401, and especially, for denominations in DC403)

6.) *Cost of All Required DC Materials* (\$164-191)

DC101: DC Course Book (\$20); *Saving Life of Christ* (\$10-15)

DC201/202: DC Book (\$25)

DC301/401: DC Book (\$25)

-DC301: *Inside Out* (\$12-16); *Teaching to Change Lives* (\$11-15)

-DC401: *Unmasking the Cults* (\$8-10); *Across the Spectrum* (\$17-25)

DC402/403: DC Book (\$25); *Christian History Made Easy* (\$11-15)

→ The higher price of the non-DC books is the retail price; the lower price is from Amazon and CBD. Or if buying in bulk, you might be able to deal with a publisher directly.

→ For now, our materials are still based on the NIV-1984. But feel free to use other translations, especially in the Bible reading.

Introduction: How to Run a DC Group

Things to Do Before the First Meeting

- 1.) The type of group: We've done men's groups and women's groups. We can imagine effective (but different) co-ed groups. Groups for college or high school students would work well. And we can imagine a range of other combinations (e.g., father/son). We've also considered a couple's group, but worry about some practical concerns: Are the *husband and wife* balanced in terms of faith, commitment, ability, etc.? Would there be problems for couples with disagreeing in public? Will they be able to make consistent and inexpensive child care arrangements? And can they properly balance family, work and other commitments with DC?
- 2.) The size of the group: We would recommend an ideal size of 10-12. Fewer people can work but would lose some richness in the discussion, especially at the 400-level. (I'd rather run a co-ed group of 10, than two single-gender groups of 5 each.) More than 12 is difficult—both with respect to facilitating a group of that size and building relationships within the group. Of course, group size will also affect group dynamics—for example, to encourage more talkative people to be quiet and to encourage quieter people to speak up.
- 3.) The time: Determine the optimal time for weekly meetings—which day and whether to meet early morning, mid-morning, noon-time, or in the evening. (Our most popular time, by far, has been a weekday at 6:00-7:30 AM.) If you have multiple groups, encourage them to attend or switch to another group if they have a scheduling conflict.
- 4.) The invitation:
 - a.) If you're casting a wider net, send an email that includes many of the points in the first section of this guide.
 - b.) Generally, you'll want to invite some or all of the prospective DC'ers prayerfully and personally.
 - c.) Obvious candidates include those who have already completed at least one rigorous study or have some experience with Bible studies that require them to prepare to some extent.
 - d.) *Make sure to communicate appropriate expectations—in particular, the work load involved, the type of study this is, and the attendance expected.*
 - d.) Recruiting pairs or existing small groups may be wise; the flip side is that if they are not satisfied, you may have greater attrition!
 - f.) If you're asking friends or those who are active in your ministry, be careful not to push the invitation too strongly. Inappropriate motives for getting into the group may well cause more harm than good.

Things to Do Before the First Meeting (cont'd)

4.) The invitation (cont'd):

g.) *Make clear that you're not asking them to commit to the full 21 months from the beginning—merely the first 10-week semester.* If they find the program to their liking, they can re-up for DC201 and beyond.

h.) Strongly consider asking them to commit funds (for materials and hopefully a retreat on Spiritual Disciplines) up-front, especially if space in your groups will be limited. In our experience, there's often a big gap between those who say they're in and those who are really in. (If that's not financially feasible in your context, you can do a modified version of the SD Retreat.)

5.) The list: Compile the names, phone numbers, email addresses of your DC'ers. ***Study their names***—and learn them before (or at) the first meeting if possible. During the first meeting, we strongly urge you to put together a ***picture directory*** with biographical info (spouse's name and anniversary, kids' names and ages, work and church info, contact info, etc.). Excel spreadsheets and Shutterfly are two mechanisms for doing this. You can go a step further and produce 4" * 6" cards for each DC'er.

6.) The prep: Tell them that no preparation is required for the first meeting—only their presence and some prayer. Tell them about the Spiritual Disciplines Retreat so they can get it on their calendars and prepare to tell you in the first week whether they will be able to attend. Pray for those who will be joining you.

7.) The room: At least for men, you'll probably want chairs and tables in a rectangle so they can face each other and write stuff down. (Some women have said they seem to do better without tables, perhaps because it comes off as more academic and puts a barrier between them.) Moreover, think about where you're (not) going to sit. Put yourself in a corner or in the middle of the short side of a rectangle—so you can see everyone well. If you're using co-leaders, you'll be able to see a lot more if the co-leaders sit apart.

8.) Spiritual Disciplines Retreat: We strongly encourage you to make arrangements for a Spiritual Disciplines retreat on the weekend between the 5th and 6th meetings—or between the 6th and 7th meetings. (Another good option is to have it immediately after 101 is over, especially for groups whose members already know each other relatively well.) Ideally, the retreat will go from Friday evening through Saturday at noon—overnight, to build additional camaraderie. (Another option would be an all-day or four-hour evening format.) For us, attendance is mandatory—and we build the cost of the retreat into the registration fee. ***(There is a separate part of the Leaders Guide which addresses this. If I haven't sent this to you, please remind me!)***

Things to Do Before the First Meeting (cont'd)

9.) Likewise, we strongly encourage an evening marriage event or an overnight marriage retreat in the Spring (between DC201 and DC202). (In the two years of DC, we rotate those two.) Spouses should be included and, of course, made to feel as welcome as possible. Be conscious of cost, providing scholarships as possible and as needed. ***(There is a separate part of the Leaders Guide which addresses this. If I haven't sent this to you, please remind me!)***

10.) The books: Of course, you'll need to order an adequate number of copies of DC101 to distribute in the first week. In addition, you'll need Ian Thomas' *The Saving Life of Christ* during the first semester. We would recommend you purchasing it and handing it out. (You may want to suggest that they three-hole punch the DC book and put it in a binder—which could also hold additional notes, articles, and so on.)

11.) A prospective “feeder course”: Consider using “An Intro to Spiritual Disciplines” as an entry into DC. (We use it in the Summer preceding our Fall DC groups.) The course would be a facilitator-led small group setting where DC'ers read through and discuss books by Dallas Willard (*The Spirit of the Disciplines*), Richard Foster (*Celebration of Discipline*), and John Ortberg (*The Life You've Always Wanted*). The course can also be used as an exit from DC, giving those who have taken it previously the opportunity to lead or co-lead it. These are described at length in the DC402 portion of the Leaders' Guide. (Send me an email if you want details now.) More broadly, in addition to DC, you'll probably want a whole range of studies to reach people where they're at. Not everyone is ready for DC—which means other studies are more appropriate for them, at least for now.

12.) The co-leaders (or tri-leaders): Have a preliminary ***discussion of what the leaders will do***—both inside and outside of the meeting time, and in their role as primary or secondary leaders from week-to-week. (For more discussion of this, see pages 18-19.)

13.) Consider a pre-DC meeting as a combination of “orientation” and “getting to know you”. We have resources from our orientations, if you're interested. Especially if it's a get-together, consider inviting spouses and family. Consider having each of them share part of their “story”. The safest candidate would be their “work/career” story.)

14.) ***To save yourself and them a lot of headaches, read and mark-up the Leaders Guide thoroughly.***

Suggested Format—e.g., of DC101 Meetings (1.5 hours)

- I. Opening Prayer, Announcements, and Memory Verse (5-10 minutes)
- II. Discussion of Bible Reading (20-35 minutes)
- III. Topic-of-the-week Bible study (40-55 minutes)
- IV. Closing Prayer and Fellowship (2-5 minutes)

Some Considerations on Format:

- 1.) Get to each meeting early; be (among) the first to arrive. Start and end your meeting on time. Every minute is precious. Remember that you are modeling leadership to them. Encourage them to be on-time as necessary.
- 2.) Some people have asked us about shorter meeting times, but it is difficult to give adequate time to all of these areas in anything less than 1.5 hours. In fact, our experience is that DC'ers wish there was far more time to talk about the material at the meetings. (Some people have asked us about longer meeting times. On occasion, if your schedule allows it, we can see extending the time to 2 hours. But if you're running a tight ship—avoiding tangents, etc.—1.5 should generally be more than adequate.)
- 3.) We have built *some flexibility* into the meeting format—and on occasion, might advocate even more flexibility for certain meetings. The idea is to provide *a framework* without limiting freedom excessively. Spirit-led deviations are encouraged; failing to manage your time effectively and strategically is not.
- 4.) We would strongly suggest *writing the schedule on the board* at least for the first few weeks. This will communicate your time constraints and your anticipated schedule—and will help them hold you accountable. *More broadly, if you don't lead, someone else will.*
- 5.) That said, a common problem is extending the *Bible reading discussion too long* (assuming you start with that). It's not that such discussion is without fruit—but rather, that it is often a matter of settling for good rather than the best.
- 6.) In DC201 and 202, there is more time for in-meeting prayer—and it is more appropriate given the topics we'll study (more later). But in DC101, you will probably be hard-pressed just to cover the material within 1.5 hours. You'll want to encourage them to share “serious” and timely prayer requests in the meeting while handling more mundane requests through email or on a list circulated during the meeting.
- 7.) *In DC301ff, each week's topic become preeminent*, so the Bible study precedes the Bible reading—and often, there will not be much (or any) time to devote to a discussion of the Bible reading.

Some Considerations for the Bible Memorization

- 1.) The new memory verse will relate to the Bible study topic for that week. The review verses will be some combination of recent verses and past memory verses that relate to the weekly topic. (In DC301, it's review only—a way to make that semester [usually in the summer] a little lighter—and to solidify our knowledge of those verses.)
- 2.) **Everyone** should recite the new memory verse *with its location*. (Knowing the location of a verse is also important.) **Rotate the review verses** among DC'ers, having each DC'er do one each.
- 3.) As a model and for the implied accountability, we encourage the **co-leaders to say at least the new verse(s)**. Whether or not you recite the verses, make sure you and your co-leader know them!
- 4.) **Work in some creativity** by trying different methods: the whole group saying it aloud; say it one word at a time going around in a circle; timed writing of the verse; have DC'ers model their favorite method for learning the verse; and so on. For the review verses, consider drawing Jenga blocks—with the verse and the first two words written on them—from a hat. It turns out that there are 54 weeks of memory verses—and 54 Jenga blocks in a full set!
- 5.) **Rotate who goes first**, but those with an *atypical translation* should go last. (We're using NIV84 for now, but there's no problem using other translations.)
- 6.) **Hold people accountable without putting them on-the-spot too much—often, a delicate balance**. Note also that *the default should be that they will know it*, so assume that they have the knowledge and deal with it as tactfully as possible if they do not. It is a gray area to decide when to intervene if a memory verse is not relayed perfectly. You don't want to encourage error by not saying anything. But you don't want to be so legalistic that the focus turns from the larger purpose to nit-picking. Keep in mind their personality and previous performance (softer/tougher on those who would benefit from a given approach) and the extent of the error. Be tactful and use *some humor*.
- 7.) Consider that you are **developing a “culture”** in communicating your expectations—both with respect to memory verses and in general. And in getting started, it is usually easier to **start stronger/stricter** and relax a bit later.
- 8.) Choose review verses strategically—in particular, picking easier ones for those who struggle, to build their confidence.
- 9.) **Larger mistakes** can also be **“teachable/memorable moments”**—for example, the omission of “and Savior” from II Peter 3:18, which can be used to talk about why both phrases are included in the verse.

Some Considerations for the Bible Memorization (cont'd)

10.) Typically, you'll want some (*brief/tight*) *discussion of the memory verse*—either something specific you have in mind (e.g., “Why did Peter say Lord and Savior? What’s the difference between the two?”) or broad questions (e.g., “What did you get from this?” or “Why is this verse in here?”) or opening it up for general comments from the group. You can do this *after the memory verse or within the lesson*. (Make sure they connect that the verses tie to the lessons!) On occasion, you may also find it helpful to provide context—either for the book, chapter, or surrounding verses.

11.) *Expect some grumbling* about the difficulty of memorization from some people—and plan to address it by pointing out the benefits of doing Bible memorization, the many *means of memorization provided* (see also: the cards, audio on the website for auditory learners, MemorizeNow.com, scripturetyper.com, or a phone app such as Bible Memory by Mobilize Faith), the need to spend some time in starting a new (spiritual) discipline, your willingness (or those in the group) to provide them with *some accountability*, etc.

12.) You may want to suggest (or distribute) a business card holder or a key-ring (and a punch-hole) to keep track of the verses.

13.) You might want to suggest that they make the memory verse a part of their *prayer life* for that week—e.g., praying the verse for the DC'er on their right/left. Some people get *their kids* to memorize them, providing some accountability.

14.) On occasion, you may find it useful to challenge them to occasionally memorize other verses they find significant.

15.) At our Spiritual Disciplines Retreat, we provide a quiz on the memory verses—an *ice-maker* of sorts!

Some Considerations for the Bible Reading

1.) In the Leaders Guide, we provide a brief introduction for the books we'll read up through DC202.

2.) We have tried to pair up the Bible reading with the Bible study topics when possible, but they will only coincide on occasion.

Some Considerations for the Bible Reading (cont'd)

- 3.) Make sure that you and DC'ers of your group are clear on the *distinction between Bible reading and Bible study*. (You'll make this point in week 1 but will probably need to reiterate.) Some clues: if someone says they're *spending 8-10 hours per week* in preparation; their reading portion is loaded but their study portion is not complete; and/or their comments are *too "technical"*, then they're probably *studying* the Bible reading. The former is reading for some combination of pleasure, meditation, occasional insights, and an overview of the material (forest more than trees). The latter is reading for some combination of retention and digging into the details of the text (trees more than forest).
- 4.) Some people will tend to make relatively technical comments. Re-direct them by asking for a personal application.
- 5.) You'll want to develop a *"presence"* in the Scripture reading part of the lesson. You don't need to comment on every comment they make. But often, it's useful to add a word of encouragement ("good stuff"), a reflection back to an earlier comment (connecting it to the person who gave it), a comment of yours on the verse, a segue to another verse you find interesting, or just move it along "[any] other comments?". Part of having a presence is a greater ability to intervene to (more) tactfully cut off people's comments. In contrast, if you haven't said much, then intervention will probably be more awkward—already among the most difficult tasks for a facilitator.
- 6.) We could spend the entire 1.5 hours on the Bible reading, but that is not our purpose.
- 7.) Pace yourself during the Bible reading. (On average, you'll have to "cover" two chapters every four to six minutes.) Your choice of covering one, two, or three chapters at a time will greatly influence the pace. Lay out a schedule for the amount of time you expect to spend on each chunk of the reading.
- 8.) One way to cut off tangents related to particular words is by mentioning "word studies"—something they will be equipped to do in a few weeks. In the meantime, if you want, you can do a word study on it and get back to them with an answer.
- 9.) A small thing that may help with *time management*: Your DC'ers are looking to you for leadership, not knowing how much time you would like to allocate to each part of the study. *If you leave things open-ended, they are more likely to fill the gap. If you send signals that you'd like to move on*, they will typically sense your urgency and move along or restrict their comments to those they perceive to be relatively important. For example, you can explicitly mention that the comments are good, but we need to move on—or instead of asking "what else...?", you can ask "anything else...?". Or use something more explicit to close the loop: "ok, 30 seconds..." or "one more comment". In any case, *if you don't lead, someone else will!*

Some Considerations for the Bible Reading (cont'd)

10.) This is the *easiest place within DC to establish a culture for having everyone speak*. Many Bible study groups allow a few people to talk; we want everyone to participate (more or less equally) in our groups. *All things equal, we're more interested in developing leaders than in imparting knowledge*. If you have people who are relatively quiet, this is an easy place to get them involved—by asking them to speak within an open-ended invitation to comment on a few chapters from the Bible reading.

11.) A reasonable goal would be to have everyone speak at least twice during this part of the meeting. If you have people who haven't commented halfway through the reading, *make it a point to call on them at that point*.

12.) As the leader, don't feel like you have to be able answer every question. You'll find it helpful to use the phrase, *"I don't know"*. Beyond that, *don't feel the need to answer* any given question in the meeting. You may decide that it is not worth pursuing a tangent in the meeting—or that you'd like to answer it, but will need to do some research and get back with the group. Likewise, it may be useful to try to anticipate certain questions. And again, the further you go in the study, the more likely that they will have the resources necessary to answer their own questions. Although you're probably most concerned about having and imparting knowledge, given a threshold of knowledge, it is shepherding your DC'ers and running a group that are probably more important.

13.) Your ability to contribute to discussions about the Bible reading is directly proportional (or exponential) to your understanding of Scripture. Especially for those less familiar with Scripture, resources like the NIV Study Bible, Halley's *Bible Handbook*, *A Newcomer's Guide to the Bible* by Michael Armour, or other general resources may be very helpful. That said, remember that the discussion of the Bible reading is not meant to be particularly detailed. For engaging introductions to books of the Bible, see The Bible Project—e.g., this one for Matthew: <http://youtu.be/iriW0zX492c>.

14.) It is common, especially in the Bible reading, to run into topics that we will not cover until *the 400-level*. (Among other things, this means that you need to be acquainted with the topical coverage at the 400-level. Review the Table of Contents on the inside cover of the DC coursebook.) One of the first times this happens, you'll want to explain why you're choosing to postpone—that a few minutes on a complicated topic will confuse more than it will inform. If you're prepared, you may be able to give a quick synopsis by saying "Some would say...while others would say..." or "There are X schools of thought on that..." In any case, you want to make clear that your intent is to put off the question rather than to blow it off.

Some Considerations for the Bible Study

- 1.) In your DC book, write down each verse location and its key ideas/phrases/words—so you can *keep the references straight*.
- 2.) Do the study on your own and *then check the leader's guide on a weekly basis* for our attempts at communicating value-added to you and clarifying questions.
- 3.) Again, consider the *warm-up questions and more open-ended questions* (e.g., “Anything on question #2?” rather than question 2b) to get quieter DC'ers involved.
- 4.) The articles are meant to supplement the study. Some weeks, you'll spend a lot of time on them; other weeks, little time. As you see fit, cover them before or during the study. Ask them for general comments about the article—or get more specific, asking about key phrases or sentences. *Ask them what they have underlined/starred, implying that they should have a “system”*. Be careful how/if you divide them up too much. You will typically spend little time on them, but they can be a huge part of the discussion.
- 5.) If DC'ers struggle with interpreting a question or a passage, encourage them to read the relevant passage out loud—and add context as appropriate. Often, engaging other senses can be helpful.
- 6.) Again, you'll have to *pace yourself*. Pick your spots, focusing on where you or others can bring value-added. *Don't feel like you must cover every question*. (You may want to place a mark by questions you'd like to cover in the meeting.) In particular, be careful not to spend too much time on the articles and the warm-up questions. Have a “*Plan B*” in hand in case you need to change your time management plans mid-stream.
- 7.) Again, where possible, tie one person's comment to another person's earlier comment.

Some Considerations for In-meeting Praise and Prayer

- 1.) *Open the meeting with a brief prayer*. You may want to do this the first few weeks, but quickly, this should be *farmed out* to DC'ers. (It's a good op for them to work on that skill.) The first few weeks, make sure to choose someone for whom this will not be a big stretch; for those who haven't done it and are quieter, this can be nerve-wracking!
- 2.) *At minimum, use a brief closing prayer* at the end of the meeting—*more likely, by you (at least early-on)*, so you can control the extent to which it wraps up the meeting, reiterates key points, etc. Even though you will be growing in your prayer life throughout DC, consider that you are modeling prayer for your DC'ers.
- 3.) When you have a longer prayer/praise time, we would encourage you to do it at the end of the meeting—since that time can be quite flexible, your DC'ers are warmed-up, and the prayer can be informed by what has happened in the meeting.

Some Considerations for In-meeting Praise and Prayer (cont'd)

- 4.) You will have the most time to engage in prayer and praise *during 201 and 202*—and you will be asked to focus on prayer as a component of those semesters. There is so much material in 101 that groups typically settle for a short closing prayer. In 301 and beyond, going beyond minimal prayer is possible at times, but more difficult given time constraints and will require you to have very good time management skills.
- 5.) When possible, *use the week's topic to frame* the direction of the day's prayer. For example, after discussing “the tongue”, ask for particular requests that connect to prayer or praise with respect to the tongue.
- 6.) Before you get to DC201, *do NOT* do ten minutes of “go-around-the-room-for-everyone-to-think-up-something-laundry-list” of prayer requests. You want people to feel the *freedom to share larger concerns*, *but* not to use a lot of (valuable) time with more mundane requests. Have a frank discussion of this with your group.
- 7.) One angle is to convert prayers about X to prayers about how your DC'er can handle X. For example, a neighbor has a heart attack. Instead of praying for the neighbor within DC, pray for how the DC'er can reach out to the neighbor within his trial.
- 8.) Use *email (or circulate a sheet* during the meeting) to handle standard praise reports and prayer requests, especially those that arise during the week. This can be *delegated*.
- 9.) Whether email or verbal, make sure that *confidentiality* is preserved appropriately. Internally, the group should foster transparency and a “safe place” for prayer and sharing. Externally, confidentiality should be preserved in an appropriate manner. If someone shares something inappropriately, you will need to say something—perhaps forcefully—about how to do this properly.
- 10.) Be vulnerable/transparent with your own requests.
- 11.) Follow up as appropriate on prayer requests.
- 12.) *Try not to get into a rut* in whatever you do with prayer. Mix up your approach and get creative: sit vs. stand vs. on knees vs. prostrate; as a group vs. small groups vs. pairs vs. silent; directed prayers by co-leaders on a topic vs. prayer requests; “popcorn” vs. paragraphs; practice silence and listening; and so on. *Be clear in providing direction*.
- 13.) Lay hands on people as appropriate (Jas 5:16)—after the meeting or as appropriate, immediately.
- 14.) Encourage them to write others' prayer requests on *next week's* MV or reading pages—to remind them more easily.

In leading discussion...

- 1.) Remember that you are *more facilitator than teacher*; they should be talking more than you. Since your DC'ers have completed their work, you should only need to introduce material, redirect some comments and questions by allowing others to follow-up (this may also allow you to stall for additional time!), respond to some comments yourself (as necessary), ask provocative questions (especially if answers are vague or aren't digging deep enough), articulate a few key points they don't make, and wrap-up with a summary. Note that you don't always have to provide a response to everything anybody says. It's often ok to say something like "good point" and simply move on. Finally, make sure to maintain good eye contact as people speak.
- 2.) That said, you're *still a teacher/leader*. There will be times for you to make value-added comments. But you will "control" the discussion by asking questions more than making comments. There will be times for you to actively promote a vision of lay-leadership. There will be times when you'll lay hands on someone in prayer, exhort them to step up their effort, help them think strategically about getting something done, encourage them to be more patient with their children, etc.
- 3.) At the margin, consider refraining from critical comments, particularly when responding to quieter people. We don't want to tolerate heresy or error, but minor corrections might undermine confidence, at least in some people.
- 4.) When asking questions of your DC'ers, avoid questions that will result in yes/no or other short answers—or follow up by asking why.
- 5.) *Keep track of the number of comments* each person gives, especially early-on. (Consider dividing comments into reading, article, and study.) An easy way to do this is to construct a diagram of your table set-up with each person's name written in the proper space—and then make marks next to their names. (To keep track of this and everything else you'll want to monitor, check out the Gassman/Mahlbacher spreadsheet on our website.)
- 6.) If some DC'ers are answering too often (relative to others in the meeting), find artful ways to encourage others to talk instead. When seeking comments, avoid eye contact with your big talkers. If some DC'ers are "too quiet", try to encourage them to speak up—especially by asking them the more open-ended questions (e.g., "What do you have on the warm-up questions?"). In our groups, we want everyone to participate. At minimum, even with 10-12 DC'ers, your goal should be for everyone to say something significant a handful of times in each meeting. Whether you're that specific or not, communicate the expectation that everyone will actively participate in discussions.

In leading discussion... (cont'd)

7.) ***Big talkers will talk less if*** you're active here—especially, if you're ***getting quieter DC'ers to talk*** moreso. (There will be less room for them to speak!) On occasion, you may find it necessary to talk with big talkers or quieter members ***outside of the meeting*** to communicate our expectations here.

8.) ***While allowing enough space for the Spirit to move, stay on schedule as closely as possible***—especially with respect to ending on time. The two most difficult challenges of facilitating are staying on pace and artfully ending tangents—by tactfully intervening to end them and segue to another topic &/or pushing their discussion outside the meeting.

9.) Set time goals—for example, that you expect to be at question #3 by 7:00. At least early-on, lay out the amounts of time they expect to spend on memory (and administrative details), reading, article, study questions, preview of next week's material, and closing prayer.

10.) In general, discuss the objective of the lesson, cover the lesson, and then ask “so what?” Try to move beyond information and knowledge to wisdom.

11.) Try to use their names in responding to them—especially in tying a later comment to a previous comment (e.g., “that takes us back to what Tom said...”). This is especially important to encourage quieter DC'ers.

12.) ***Keep an eye on their books***—to make sure that they're prepared for the meeting, taking notes on the ***reading***, underlining stuff in the ***articles***, writing down additional answers for the study, and so on.

A few thoughts if you're using co-leaders...

When possible, in most cases, we'd recommend using pairs (or even trios; vs. an individual) to lead a DC group). As per Luke 10:1, there are many good reasons for it:

1.) One or both leaders may have scheduling constraints—where weekly attendance would be difficult or impossible.

2.) Although both leaders would still need to prepare for the meeting, the two individuals could switch off “top” leadership responsibility for each week, lessening the prep time a bit. (On average, our co-leaders prepare about six hours per week—slightly more time than when they first went through the material.) Alternatively, the leaders can split responsibility within each week, alternating between leading different parts of the week's agenda.

A few thoughts if you're using co-leaders... (cont'd)

- 3.) The two leaders combined will have a greater pool of knowledge and wisdom. In any given week, one will be primarily responsible as the leader, but the other co-leader should “chime in” as appropriate.
- 4.) Beyond piping in with the occasional comment, you may decide to have the “*secondary*” co-leader *play other vital roles* during the meeting—taking charge of *time management* (moving it along as he sees fit) &/or “*class participation*” (aggressively bringing in the quieter DC’ers). In “running” a group, there are many things to juggle, and it may be beneficial to give discrete tasks to your partner. In any case, the secondary co-leader also plays an important role outside of the meeting in terms of providing *candid feedback and accountability*.
- 5.) A relatively strong or experienced leader would have an opportunity to mentor a relatively weak or inexperienced leader.
- 6.) DC can tend to be too informational and not relational enough. As such, two or three leaders are in a better position to divide the group and form deeper relationships with those in their group. *Each leader can “take” a subset of your DC’ers*, meeting them or individuals for breakfast, coffee or lunch on occasion, meeting during the semester breaks, having couples over for dinner, etc. As per our training session, shepherding is a vastly under-rated part of leadership.
- 7.) Note that leaders may have *different styles* and goals, but should ***not*** have widely *disparate standards*. Discuss this at some length before starting into DC and discuss along the way as needed. For example, you don’t want to establish a culture where co-leader A is lax on memory verses while co-leader B is much more stringent.
- 8.) Consider *where the two co-leaders should sit*. Put yourself in a corner or in the middle of the short side of a rectangle—so you can see everyone well. Sitting apart generally allows you to see a lot more.

Along the way...

- 1.) *Pray* on a regular basis outside of the meeting—in general terms *for the group as a whole* (e.g., for their physical health, moral purity, spiritual zeal, etc.) and in specific terms *for individual DC’ers*. See them as individuals within a group. Consider using Biblical prayers as a format for your prayers (e.g., Eph 1:17-19a, 3:14-21, Phil 1:9-11, Col 1:9-12, 4:2-6).

Along the way... (cont'd)

2.) *Send emails, make phone calls*, pray for them on the phone, offer a word before/after the meeting, follow up on prayer requests, and find other forms of *encouragement and exhortation* for those in your group. Make clear that they can talk with you, ask for prayer, etc. If you have an early morning group, consider suggesting wake-up calls for those who “have trouble waking up” (or moving their alarm clocks across the room).

3.) *Keep track of their attendance*. If you don't, you're likely to end up in the uncomfortable position of sensing that one's attendance has not been adequate, but not knowing for sure. Since the beginning of DC, we've wrestled with whether to have an attendance “policy”—but have always decided not to do it. Advantages include sending a stronger signal about the commitment involved and making it easier to deal with those who have been too sporadic; disadvantages include inflexibility in dealing with special cases and *a tendency toward Pharisaism*. In any case, attendance should be seen as just short of mandatory. *One rule of thumb*: if they are well enough (or the roads are good enough) to go to work, they should get to their DC group.

4.) Even though your DC'ers will have signed a covenant, there will likely be *awkward moments* with those whose attendance, timeliness, or preparation is less than what they've committed. You'll need to figure out “*what would Jesus do*” with *apprentices who* miss a few meetings, are often late, or come lightly prepared. In particular, look for and deal with troubling patterns in behavior. (If you don't, the problems will rarely go away on their own!) Encourage DC'ers to alert you ahead of time if they plan to be late, absent, or need to leave early. For unexpected absences, contact them ASAP. Finally, consider also having other DC'ers check on those who miss the meeting.

5.) You may want to get an assistant to help with the administrative details of the group—attendance, follow-up, ordering books, etc. If your church has multiple groups, please keep the relevant people apprised of changes in rosters, email addresses, etc. Please be considerate by promptly returning emails.

6.) If you have more than one group doing DC, consider sitting in on each other's groups. This can promote consistency and give each person ideas on how to be more effective.

7.) If you have more than one group during DC, encourage those who miss your group to attend another. On your part, greet and engage visitors, and communicate with the other group leaders about the visitors' attendance and engagement.

8.) As time passes and relationships develop, you may find DC'ers who have serious issues—for example, marriage or financial problems—that require more attention from you, another church leader, a counselor, etc. Take care to handle such problems with grace and truth, bringing in other leaders and resources as appropriate.

Along the way... (cont'd)

9.) DC can be completed with varying levels of shepherding and group intimacy, but we certainly want to encourage more of it than less. To some extent, the level of intimacy you'll experience is a function of "natural chemistry". In any case, you have at least some control in establishing an environment and providing additional opportunities (e.g., having DC'ers share testimonies). You will want to meet with your DC'ers, on occasion, outside of normal meetings—for fellowship, friendship, prayer, encouragement, and so on. You can also encourage them to break into smaller groups for greater accountability. At the very least, you'll want to observe the "celebrations" at the end of some of the semesters. Consider involving the spouses as well, perhaps inviting a few couples over for dinner.

10.) Consider food/coffee. But it's not required and certainly don't let it be a distraction. If so, DC'ers should rotate the responsibility.

11.) Think and plan ahead—in preparing the Spiritual Disciplines and Marriage retreats and the celebrations. It can be surprisingly difficult to arrange for retreats. And you'll want to give as much notice as possible so people can reserve the dates on their calendars. We have included some "ticklers" in the Leaders Guide to help with this and the other difficult aspects of organizing these groups.

12.) Consider asking for formal and informal feedback periodically.

13.) *Find service opportunities* to include sometime within the curriculum (especially if you're at a larger church and/or developing new leaders). We do ours during the three semester breaks—in November/December, August, and then again in Nov/Dec. In addition to helping others, these projects build community within the group, inform discussions of stewardship, and through your example, promote the Christian model of servant-leadership. A variety of service projects could be useful—from everyone working on one large project to people pairing up and doing smaller projects. Ideally, these are generated within your group—e.g., X serves on the Board of Directors for a non-profit that needs something; or Y has an elderly neighbor who needs housework, painting, or raking leaves to be done.

14.) Sometime within the first nine months, find a place for you and your DC'ers to briefly share three of their "stories"—with respect to God, family and work. This could be done by setting aside some time during a number of regular DC meetings—or with separate meetings (perhaps combined with socials). An easy time to do this would be the meeting between DC101 and DC201 when you discuss the first half of Jeremiah. You might also consider extending your spiritual disciplines retreat by one segment to accomplish this. It should be accompanied by prayer and laying on hands as appropriate.