



AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

**ENGAGING WITH OTHER PEOPLE IN WAYS THAT
REFLECT THE HEART OF GOD TOWARD THEM**



D I M E N S I O N S O F D I S C I P L E S H I P G U I D E

LOGAN | RIDLEY | DEVRIES



DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Tara Miller's exceptional writing skills bring our thoughts and ideas to life. Above all others, she makes this book possible. Over many years, her creative collaboration makes it possible to give written resources to the Church so that people can discover and live out their God-given purpose.

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ISBN: 978-1-939921-05-5

Printed in the United States of America

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GROWING IN AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Authentic relationships is one of eight discipleship guides for the Dimensions of Discipleship series. It doesn't matter which guide you start with—start wherever you'd like and move on to wherever God is leading you next. When we live in the dynamic rhythm and flow of a missional life, we need to take our cues from the Holy Spirit.

These eight guides are organized according to the tree diagram below; examine it to see how all of the pieces fit together. Authentic relationships is the branch of the tree-- rooted in our relationship with God—that demonstrates our faith by the way we relate to other people.





DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Authentic relationships are one of the most clear, visible evidences of our relationship with God. Jesus told his disciples we would be known by our love. It's the most readily recognizable characteristic of a disciple of Jesus. We are called to engage with other people in ways that reflect the heart of God toward them.



"Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets." Matthew 7:12

We are called to reflect God to people... yet we are not God. We are imperfect, broken people who make mistakes, sin against one another, and yield to temptation. So given our fallen condition, how can we reflect God well? Through honesty and transparency. It's the same rule we learned in kindergarten: admit it when you make a mistake and say you're sorry. Faults are hardest to overlook when they go unacknowledged by the owner of that fault. Yet there's something appealing about people who admit their mistakes and ask forgiveness. It puts godliness as a transforming agent into perspective.

So what do authentic relationships with others look like? The following five-part journey covers these five essential expressions of authentic relationships:

- Showing respect for all people
- Forgiving others and asking forgiveness
- Confronting others with humility as necessary
- Praying with and for others
- Supporting each other honestly through life challenges

"There is a beautiful transparency to honest disciples who never wear a false face and do not pretend to be anything but who they are."
—Brennan Manning

Meet together in a group of three or four to talk through each of these expressions. Ask each other these questions. Wait for and listen to responses from the heart. Encourage, challenge, and affirm one another. Go at your own pace: you can do one a week or one a month, whatever pace works best for you. Be sure to allow enough time to live into these behaviors.



PART 1: SHOWING RESPECT FOR ALL PEOPLE



**KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU SHOWING RESPECT FOR ALL PEOPLE?
HOW CAN YOU GROW IN THAT?**

We treat people with respect because they are created in the image of God. Every single human being on the earth—from beggars on the street to kings and rulers, young and old, healthy and sick, people we like and people we don't. We are all created in the image of God and deserving of basic respect.

How does that respect show? In many, many different ways, depending on the needs and on the relationship you have with the person: treating others with kindness, being honest, doing no harm, respecting the opinions of others even when you disagree, practicing generosity, taking time, showing patience. The list of possibilities is as long as scripture itself.

"You can safely assume you've created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do."
—Anne Lamott

PRAYER AND JOURNALING

Who do you have the most trouble respecting? You can think of individuals or groups of people. (Consider economic status, race, culture, education, religion, sexual orientation, status, life choices, etc.)

What is it that gets in the way of respect? What steps can you take to address that? As a first step, set aside half an hour to pray for people you have a tough time respecting. Journal about that experience afterwards.

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below. Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.



Genesis 1:26-27:

Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

²⁷ So God created human beings in his own image.

In the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

Genesis 33:10-11:

But Jacob insisted, "No, if I have found favor with you, please accept this gift from me. And what a relief to see your friendly smile. It is like seeing the face of God! ¹¹ Please take this gift I have brought you, for God has been very gracious to me. I have more than enough." And because Jacob insisted, Esau finally accepted the gift.

James 2:1-13:

My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others?

² For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. ³ If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, "You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor"—well, ⁴ doesn't this discrimination show that your judgments are guided by evil motives?

Namaste (greeting, from the Sanskrit and Hindi): I see God in you

⁵ Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters. Hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the Kingdom he promised to those who love him? ⁶ But you dishonor the poor! Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? ⁷ Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear?

⁸ Yes indeed, it is good when you obey the royal law as found in the Scriptures: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ⁹ But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law.

¹⁰ For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws. ¹¹ For the same God who said, "You must not commit adultery," also said, "You



must not murder.” So if you murder someone but do not commit adultery, you have still broken the law.

¹² So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free. ¹³ There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you.



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

When have you seen God in someone else? What has that looked like?

Where do you see the image of God in those who do not yet follow Jesus?

How can you more intentionally seek to see the image of God in people?

Who do you know right now who needs to believe that the image of God resides in them?

What are ways you show respect? What are ways you indicate it when you do not respect people?

Under what circumstances do you feel you must agree with a person in order to accept them?

When have you felt unaccepted, like you don't belong?



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



PART 2: FORGIVING OTHERS AND ASKING FORGIVENESS



KEY QUESTION: WHO DO YOU NEED TO FORGIVE? WHO DO YOU NEED TO ASK FOR FORGIVENESS?

Part of living in a fallen world means we sin against one another and are sinned against. Sometimes it's unintentional, sometimes it's intentional, but either way it hurts. What then? We have a hard time letting go of offenses against us. We have a hard time acknowledging the harm we've done to others. The forgiveness that lies at the heart of the gospel is the only thing that has the power to free us to live authentically within imperfect relationships with imperfect people.

"Silence is sometimes the best answer"
—Dalai Lama XIV

This forgiveness isn't cheap. It doesn't mean we pretend no real harm was done. It doesn't mean we pretend to forget. It means we remember, acknowledge the hurt, and choose to let go anyway. Only through the power of God can we access this kind of forgiveness: we forgive because he forgave us (Col. 3:13).

Remember that both parts of the forgiveness process are essential: we need to ask for forgiveness and we need to forgive others. One without the other is incomplete. When we confess our sins, do what we can to make it right, and embrace the fact that we are forgiven... only then are we truly free to forgive others and not hold onto grievances. If we can't forgive others, we've likely not accepted God's forgiveness for ourselves.

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below. Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.



Luke 15:11-32:

¹¹ To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons.

¹² The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

¹³ "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. ¹⁴ About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. ¹⁵ He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and



the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶ The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸ I will go home to my father and say, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.'"

²⁰ "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. ²¹ His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'

²² "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. ²³ And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, ²⁴ for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began.

²⁵ "Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, ²⁶ and he asked one of the servants what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.'

²⁸ "The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, ²⁹ but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. ³⁰ Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!'

³¹ "His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. ³² We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!'"

Matthew 6:14-15:

"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

When is the last time you asked for forgiveness?

When is the last time you asked for help with something you couldn't do on your own?

What does it usually take to bring you to the point of asking for forgiveness? For help?

What emotions surround that process?

What response do you expect from others? What leads you to expect that response?

"Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much."
—Oscar Wilde

FORGIVENESS INVENTORY

Write down wrongs you've done and wrongs that have been done to you on scraps of paper. Then, one by one, throw those scraps of paper into a bonfire.



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



PART 3: CONFRONTING EACH OTHER WITH HUMILITY WHEN NECESSARY



KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE BEING HONEST WITH THOSE AROUND YOU AND CONFRONTING WHEN NECESSARY?

God requires that we look honestly at ourselves and at where we fall short. For a faith that places such emphasis on repentance, this should not be so difficult for Christians, but it invariably is. We will sometimes go to great lengths to avoid looking ourselves in the mirror.

For that reason we need one another. Confronting others is not an enviable job, as any prophet can attest. But it is a necessary one. Sometimes God uses other believers to point out where we are failing and how we need to change. For this reason, we need to be willing to confront one another honestly when it is necessary, even if it means we risk others being angry with us.

At the same time we need to act and speak from a place of humility. We are no better than others, even when we need to point out a fault. Let us avoid the trap of the Pharisees.

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below. Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.

“Remember that the best relationship is one in which your love for each other exceeds your need for each other.”
—Dalai Lama XIV



2 Samuel 12:1-13:

So the LORD sent Nathan the prophet to tell David this story: “There were two men in a certain town. One was rich, and one was poor. ² The rich man owned a great many sheep and cattle. ³ The poor man owned nothing but one little lamb he had bought. He raised that little lamb, and it grew up with his children. It ate from the man’s own plate and drank from his cup. He cuddled it in his arms like a baby daughter. ⁴ One day a guest arrived at the home of the rich man. But instead of killing an animal from his own flock or herd, he took the poor man’s lamb and killed it and prepared it for his guest.”

⁵ David was furious. “As surely as the LORD lives,” he vowed, “any man who would do such a thing deserves to die! ⁶ He must repay four lambs to the poor man for the one he stole and for having no pity.”



⁷ Then Nathan said to David, “You are that man! The LORD, the God of Israel, says: I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. ⁸ I gave you your master’s house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more. ⁹ Why, then, have you despised the word of the LORD and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and stolen his wife. ¹⁰ From this time on, your family will live by the sword because you have despised me by taking Uriah’s wife to be your own.

¹¹ “This is what the LORD says: Because of what you have done, I will cause your own household to rebel against you. I will give your wives to another man before your very eyes, and he will go to bed with them in public view. ¹² You did it secretly, but I will make this happen to you openly in the sight of all Israel.”

¹³ Then David confessed to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.”

Galatians 2:11-14:

¹¹ But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. ¹² When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile Christians, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn’t eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. ¹³ As a result, other Jewish Christians followed Peter’s hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

¹⁴ When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, “Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?”

EXERCISE: EASY OR HARD?

Some people find it easy to confront others. Some find it difficult. Generally speaking, those who find it difficult need to speak out more often. Those who find it easy need to speak out less often. Which camp do you fall into? What might you do to make the necessary changes in how you confront?



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

When have you sensed the need to confront someone? What did you do? What was the result?

When is a time someone confronted you? How did that feel? What can you learn from that experience about confronting others?

Do you find it difficult or easy to confront someone? Explain.

How do you go about examining your heart and motives before talking with someone? What might a good process look like?



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



PART 4: PRAYING FOR AND WITH OTHERS



KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU PRAYING FOR AND WITH OTHERS?

Our relationships have been described as horizontal and vertical: our horizontal relationships with one another and our vertical relationship with God. In prayer, we bring those two categories of relationships together. We pray for those we are in horizontal relationship with... bringing their needs and concerns before God. We pray with others to God... bringing them into our relationship within God. That creates a relational intimacy that calls for nothing less than full authenticity—with both God and others. At the same time, our relationship with God is enriched by our relationships with others. And our relationships with others are enriched by our relationship with God.

“The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies; probably because generally they are the same people.”
—G.K. Chesterton



Colossians 1:3-14:

³ We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴ For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of God’s people, ⁵ which come from your confident hope of what God has reserved for you in heaven. You have had this expectation ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News.

⁶ This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is bearing fruit everywhere by changing lives, just as it changed your lives from the day you first heard and understood the truth about God’s wonderful grace.

⁷ You learned about the Good News from Epaphras, our beloved co-worker. He is Christ’s faithful servant, and he is helping us on your behalf. ⁸ He has told us about the love for others that the Holy Spirit has given you.

⁹ So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰ Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better.

¹¹ We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, ¹² always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, ¹⁴ who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.



EXERCISE: PRAYING THE LORD'S PRAYER

One way to structure our prayers so we're praying in alignment with the teachings of Jesus is to pray through the Lord's prayer. It's not the only pattern for prayer, but it is a good one.



Matthew 6:9-13: ⁹ Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven,
may your name be kept holy.

Prayer of recognition of who God is

¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon.

Prayer of hope for the future

May your will be done on earth,
as it is in heaven.

Prayer of alignment with God's will

¹¹ Give us today the food we need,

Prayer for the provision of needs

¹² and forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

Prayer for forgiveness

¹³ And don't let us yield to temptation,
but rescue us from the evil one.

Prayer for protection from temptation



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

Who or what do you feel compelled to pray for regularly?

How often do you pray corporately with others? In what settings?

What set-aside time do you have to pray individually?

What settings are most conducive to prayer for you?

What are some creative ways you can branch out in your prayers?



PRAYER EXERCISE:

Pray in some different places and at different times than you normally do this week. If you usually pray in the morning, try praying at night. If you usually pray alone in silence, pray as you walk or run around the neighborhood. What other changes do you notice when you pray in different places and in different times?



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



PART 5: SUPPORTING EACH OTHER HONESTLY THROUGH LIFE CHALLENGES



KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU SUPPORTING OTHERS HONESTLY THROUGH LIFE CHALLENGES?

People facing challenges are all around us. Being generous relationally is one of the most significant contributions we can make. As we relationally invest in others, we—as well as they—are transformed.

How did God invest in us? In a very personal, relational way. Jesus came down as one of us. He invested in long-term relationships. He took our place on the cross. God the Father saw to the most intimate details of our creation, making us who he wanted us to be. The Holy Spirit lives within us, providing constant divine communication and direction. All of that required a lot more investment than writing a check and saying, “Be warm and well-fed.” He warmed and fed us himself.

“In misfortune, which friend remains a friend?”
—Euripides

In the same way, we are to invest in other people to the degree that we are able. God placed the people who are in our lives there for a reason. We are to love them and reflect God to them. We are there to meet their needs. Yes, we only have so much relational capacity. We can only know so many people on a personal level. How are we investing the relational capacity we do have? The degree to which we do that reflects a life of generosity.

This week read and reflect daily on the scripture below. Open a natural flow of conversational prayer with the Holy Spirit as you meditate on the scriptures, inviting him to reveal himself to you. Then gather with those who journey alongside you and interact over the discipleship questions.



1 Thessalonians 2:8-13:

⁸ We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God’s Good News but our own lives, too. ⁹ Don’t you remember, dear brothers and sisters, how hard we worked among you? Night and day we toiled to earn a living so that we would not be a burden to any of you as we preached God’s Good News to you. ¹⁰ You yourselves are our witnesses—and so is God—that we were devout and honest and faultless toward all of you believers.

¹¹ And you know that we treated each of you as a father treats his own children. ¹² We pleaded with you, encouraged you, and urged you to live your lives in a way that God would consider worthy. For he called you to share in his Kingdom and glory.



¹³ Therefore, we never stop thanking God that when you received his message from us, you didn't think of our words as mere human ideas. You accepted what we said as the very word of God—which, of course, it is. And this word continues to work in you who believe.

John 15:9-17:

⁹ "I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! ¹² This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. ¹³ There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.

¹⁶ You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

With whom are you in regular relationship?

How would you describe those relationships? Do you tend to be giving more or receiving more?

What are some ways you could give to those you are in relationship with?

What expectations do you have of others that make it difficult for you to invest in them?

What are some of the ways people have invested in you over the course of your life?

What impact did that have? What are some of the ways God has invested in you?

"Be yourself;
everyone else
is already
taken."
—Oscar Wilde



ACTION STEPS

In light of this, what is God asking you to do?

How will you do this?

When will you do this?

Who will help you?



WHAT'S NEXT?

So you've completed this guide. What now? Is there another dimension of discipleship you need to zoom in on? If so, which one?

Because the *Dimensions of Discipleship* guides aren't meant to be used in any particular order, it's up to you to do some listening to the Holy Spirit. Take a look at the big picture and decide where God is leading you next. With a holistic system, it's always a surprise. No matter which guide you choose next, you're engaged in an ongoing action-reflection process as you continue living incarnationally and missionally.

Maybe what's next isn't another *Dimensions of Discipleship* guide. Here are a few other options:

You can move on to a similar series: *The Journey Together Now* guides. You can find out more about these downloadable guides at www.loganleadership.com.

If you have a friend or mentor you've been going through these guides with—or if you'd like to begin discipling someone, you can start an online coaching relationship at www.mycoachlog.com: a tool to help you stay on track, reflect on what God is doing, and celebrate progress.

You may be ready to engage in a more formal coaching relationship with someone who can challenge you to the next level of missional living and leadership. Check out www.loganleadership.com for information on coaching.

No matter what's next for you, continue to grow in the ways you follow Jesus into your continuing journey of discipleship.