



community TRANSFORMATION

**PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT WITH OTHERS TO
FACILITATE POSITIVE CHANGE WHERE YOU
LIVE AND BEYOND**



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

COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

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COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

Community transformation 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. Community transformation is the outwardly visible result of how we live in the world corporately as followers of Jesus. If we experience God and respond to him in the ways indicated by the branches, the natural outflow of the church banded together living this way will be the transformation of the community around us.





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Community transformation means that we, as followers of Jesus, are actively contributing to positive change in the broader community—not just within the church—in cooperation with God’s work and presence there. God is already at work in the world. The question is how we as his Body can cooperate and participate in what he is doing. Community transformation means our personal involvement alongside others to facilitate positive change where we live and beyond.



“And the one sitting on the throne said, ‘Look, I am making everything new!’”
Revelation 21:5a

“Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.” Ephesians 3:20-21

Too often we look for change only in ourselves or only within our churches. God has much bigger arenas in mind to display his power. After all, he sent Jesus to earth for all of humanity. He wants the blind to see, prostitutes redeemed, the poor thriving, tyrants overthrown, children of the slums learning and contributing to changing their world. Our picture of God and what he wants to do is consistently too small.

With change that big, what can we even do? What is our role? How can we be part of this sweeping story of transformation in the world? Certainly we can’t do it all by ourselves. But when we band together with others and take small but determined steps, we begin to see that we are part of the change God is bringing.



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So what does community transformation look like from the human perspective? The following five-part journey covers these five essential expressions of community transformation:

-  Actively engaging with God in the examination of your heart
-  Cooperating with God's healing work in your life
-  Processing feedback and input from others
-  Living out new priorities and changed behavior
-  Increasingly bearing the fruit of the Spirit

"Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive."
—Dalai Lama XIV

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: PARTICIPATING IN A FAITH COMMUNITY THAT REACHES OUTSIDE OF ITSELF



KEY QUESTION: HOW IS YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY REACHING OUTSIDE OF ITSELF?

The seeds of world transformation are found in the faith community-- not only in we who have the Spirit living within us, but in others who are being redeemed, joining our faith communities, and starting new ones. Like yeast working into dough, a little bit goes a long way and it spreads throughout. That's how the Kingdom of God grows. Sprinkle in a few communities of faith, and they work their way through the whole broader community.

In this sense, individual faith communities are not the ends, but the means. They are not the goal in and of themselves. They are the tool God uses to create wider transformational change throughout the world. Through the actions of a faith community, things change and people hear. We see illustrations of how this works throughout the book of Acts.

Consider what your faith community is doing to reach outside itself and bring transformation to the world around you. You as an individual cannot do this alone. However, if your faith community is not engaged in reaching out, it is your responsibility to bring the issue to the fore. Ask those in leadership how you can be part of something bigger together.

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.

"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."
—Mother Teresa



Luke 13:20-21

²⁰ He also asked, "What else is the Kingdom of God like? ²¹ It is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough."

Acts 13:38-49:

³⁸ "Brothers, listen! We are here to proclaim that through this man Jesus there is forgiveness for your sins. ³⁹ Everyone who believes in him is declared right with God—something the law of Moses could never do. ⁴⁰ Be careful! Don't let the prophets' words apply to you. For they said,



⁴¹ 'Look, you mockers,
be amazed and die!
For I am doing something in your own day,
something you wouldn't believe
even if someone told you about it.'"

⁴² As Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue that day, the people begged them to speak about these things again the next week. ⁴³ Many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, and the two men urged them to continue to rely on the grace of God.

⁴⁴ The following week almost the entire city turned out to hear them preach the word of the Lord.

⁴⁵ But when some of the Jews saw the crowds, they were jealous; so they slandered Paul and argued against whatever he said.

⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and declared, "It was necessary that we first preach the word of God to you Jews. But since you have rejected it and judged yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we will offer it to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For the Lord gave us this command when he said, 'I have made you a light to the Gentiles,
to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.'"

⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were very glad and thanked the Lord for his message; and all who were chosen for eternal life became believers. ⁴⁹ So the Lord's message spread throughout that region.

Acts 4:32-35

All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. ³³ The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. ³⁴ There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them ³⁵ and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

Zephaniah 3:9

"Then I will purify the lips of the peoples,
that all of them may call on the name of the LORD
and serve him shoulder to shoulder. (NIV)



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

How can your faith community mirror the love of God to the broader community around you?

When people look at your community from the outside, what do they see?

How could you work together with others to serve more effectively than you could alone?

Who might you need to work alongside?

How can you serve in ways that bring widespread change to the larger community?

What effects would you like to see result from your ministry? Describe the vision.

EXERCISE:

Exercise: Community Ministry Analysis: In your group, determine major needs in your local community. Then rank the needs in terms of which ones are most pressing. Determine how your faith community can strategically respond to those needs.



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: PRAYING FOR HEALING AND RECONCILIATION IN SOCIETY



KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU PRAYING FOR HEALING AND RECONCILIATION IN SOCIETY?

We live in a society in dire need of healing. Our world is divided against itself by race, by class, by ethnic group, by religion. Sin separates us not only from God but from one another. We are a world and a people in need of healing.

Coming face to face with the needs around us for healing and reconciliation brings us face to face with our own sense of inadequacy. We know we are not strong enough, rich enough, smart enough, powerful enough to solve people's problems. We are not God; we can only do so much. That's why we bring these needs before him and prayer. We alone cannot bring healing and reconciliation, but we can experience the power of God working through us as we rely on him and listen to his voice and direction.

PRAYER

Ask God to break your heart over the things that break his heart. Ask him to bring about healing and reconciliation. Ask God to show you where he is at work.

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.

"Forgiving and being reconciled to our enemies or our loved ones are not about pretending that things are other than they are. It is not about patting one another on the back and turning a blind eye to the wrong. True reconciliation exposes the awfulness, the abuse, the hurt, the truth. It could even sometimes make things worse. It is a risky undertaking but in the end it is worthwhile, because in the end only an honest confrontation with reality can bring real healing. Superficial reconciliation can bring only superficial healing."

—Desmond Tutu



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 15:29-31:

²⁹ Jesus returned to the Sea of Galilee and climbed a hill and sat down. ³⁰ A vast crowd brought to him people who were lame, blind, crippled, those who couldn't speak, and many others. They laid them before Jesus, and he healed them all. ³¹ The crowd was amazed! Those who hadn't been able to speak were talking, the crippled were made well, the lame were walking, and the blind could see again! And they praised the God of Israel.

Mark 9:28-29:

²⁸ Afterward, when Jesus was alone in the house with his disciples, they asked him, "Why couldn't we cast out that evil spirit?"

²⁹ Jesus replied, "This kind can be cast out only by prayer."

"When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives mean the most to us, we often find that it is those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen rather to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand. The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares."

—Henri J.M. Nouwen



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

Where do you see the need for healing?

Where do you see the need for reconciliation?

How are you praying for these things? For what are you asking God?

Where do you see God at work?

Into what situations or relationships can you bring some level of healing or reconciliation?



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: INVOLVING YOURSELF IN SOCIAL JUSTICE NEEDS IN THE BROADER COMMUNITY



KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU INVOLVED IN SOCIAL JUSTICE NEEDS WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY?

In many churches, talk of social justice issues makes people afraid that the gospel message is being lost and the church is becoming too “liberal.” Although it’s true that some churches have substituted a social gospel for a literal one, a look at scripture makes clear that God has always intended social justice to be an outworking of the gospel of Jesus. They go together.

A church, acting as the church is supposed to act, will serve the cause of justice, speaking up for the widow and the orphan and those that cannot speak up for themselves. What is your part in that? Are you a passive individual allowing others in the church to act on your behalf? Or are you willing to step out personally as part of a broader effort? When you do, very often, you will find God is already there ahead of you. You are simply participating in what he is already doing.

“God is in the slums, in the cardboard boxes where the poor play house. God is in the silence of a mother who has infected her child with a virus that will end both their lives. God is in the cries heard under the rubble of war. God is in the debris of wasted opportunity and lives, and God is with us if we are with them.”

—Bono

“Don’t let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.”
—John Wooden

EXERCISE:

Once you’ve identified a particular problem in your community to address, gather together and spend some time in prayer listening to God and trying to brainstorm some possible solutions. Think how you can act both individually and corporately.

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.



Micah 6:8

No, O people, the LORD has told you what is good,
and this is what he requires of you:
to do what is right, to love mercy,
and to walk humbly with your God.

Isaiah 61:1-3

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me,
for the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted
and to proclaim that captives will be released
and prisoners will be freed.

² He has sent me to tell those who mourn
that the time of the LORD's favor has come,
and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies.

³ To all who mourn in Israel,
he will give a crown of beauty for ashes,
a joyous blessing instead of mourning,
festive praise instead of despair.
In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks
that the LORD has planted for his own glory.



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

What injustices do you feel most keenly?

What can you do about them?

What risk might that involve for you personally?

What rewards might there be?

What historical figures do you most admire for the ways in which they stood in the way of injustice?

How could you emulate them?

How can you work together with others in your faith community to make a difference?



JOURNAL:

Who are the poor in your community? Write about them. What qualities do they share? What challenges do they face? What needs do they have?



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: CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION IN PRACTICAL WAYS



KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION?

Sometimes followers of Jesus have believed—wrongly—that they do not need to care for the environment because God will destroy the world anyway at the second coming. When we look at scripture, we are told to care for and oversee creation. In Eden he told us to tend the animals, the plants, the land. We are responsible.

When Jesus returns, he returns to redeem not only us but all of creation. The scripture passages in this section clarify the extent of his restoration and our role in it. When we care for creation and participate in its restoration, we experience God and are taking a role in the coming Kingdom of God.

Even now, there are practical things we can do to care for creation. Caring for animals, working to alleviate animal suffering, growing food, replenishing tired soil, picking up trash, recycling, planting trees.... Brainstorm together to think of more.

"If your daily life seems poor, do not blame it; blame yourself, tell yourself that you are not poet enough to call forth its riches; for to the creator there is no poverty and no poor indifferent place."
—Rainer Maria Rilke



Genesis 1:31

Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!

Genesis 2:15

The LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it.

Genesis 3:17-19

And to the man he said,

"Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you.

All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it.

¹⁸ It will grow thorns and thistles for you, though you will eat of its grains.

¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat



until you return to the ground
from which you were made.
For you were made from dust,
and to dust you will return.”

Romans 8:19-23

¹⁹ For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are. ²⁰ Against its will, all creation was subjected to God’s curse. But with eager hope, ²¹ the creation looks forward to the day when it will join God’s children in glorious freedom from death and decay. ²² For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering.

2 Chronicles 7:14

Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.

IMAGINE...

- ... the creation restored and no longer crying out for redemption
- ... the people of God hiring the poor to heal their own environments (www.edenprojects.org)
- ... the impact of that hiring on the local economy (www.edenprojects.org)
- ... the end of deforestation, erosion and soil depletion
- ... productive agriculture restored to local farmers
- ... no more endangered or extinct animal species
- ... long-term sustainability



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

How do you think God has called us to steward his creation?

How was our relationship with the earth damaged by the fall?

In 2 Chronicles 7:14, what did God mean by healing the land? Why did the land need to be healed?

Where do you sense the creation groaning?

What can you do—along with your faith community—to participate in caring for creation?

Brainstorm some small, practical ways to participate in transforming creation. Think both locally and globally.



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: HELPING OTHERS CULTIVATE HEALTHY LIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS



KEY QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU HELPING OTHERS PROMOTE HEALTHY LIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS?

It's not only creation that needs to be redeemed and transformed—it's us as well. We need to help people rid their lives of destructive behaviors and patterns and replace them with healthy ones. In fact, if we focus only on ridding of destructive behavior and don't try to replace it with anything, we create a void that invites new kinds of destructive behavior. The cycle of destruction isn't broken just when we stop destroying things—it's broken when we start building things.

We need to promote health both on an individual level and on a community-wide level. Just as an individual might replace a pattern of gossip with healthy listening skills, consider what we can put in place of destruction on a community-wide scale: community centers instead of gangs, education instead of ignorance, work instead of idleness. When more and more people begin making these kinds of positive changes, we'll see whole communities growing toward greater health. Consider how your faith community can band together to see some of this vision become a reality.

"There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person, and it can never be filled by any created thing. It can only be filled by God, made known through Jesus Christ."
—Blaise Pascal



Ephesians 4:17-32

¹⁷ With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. ¹⁸ Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. ¹⁹ They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.

²⁰ But that isn't what you learned about Christ. ²¹ Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, ²² throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. ²³ Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. ²⁴ Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

²⁵ So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body.



²⁶ And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

²⁸ If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. ²⁹ Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

³⁰ And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. ³² Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

John 10:10

¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

PRAYER AND REFLECTION:

Spend some time envisioning the kind of community God could transform this community into. What would that look like?



DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS:

What are you sensing from God about your community?

What do you see in your community that needs change?

With what could you fill the voids that would be left?

Who might help you do that?

How might your faith community join you in that? How might you join your faith community in that?



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.