

The Witnessing Disciple

Seeing God at Work through Spiritual Conversations



Part of a Series of 6 Small Group Studies



MDPC
MEMORIAL DRIVE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH





03	Session 1: Commission
07	Session 2: Core
09	Session 3: Conversation
11	Session 4: Confidence
13	Session 5: Call
15	Session 6: Communication
17	Appendix



1 Welcome everyone and open with prayer.

!!!!NOTE: If this is your group's first meeting with any of these studies, please work through Sections 2 and 3. If you have done this before, please skip ahead to Section 4.

2 Introduce every group member (15 minutes).

Go around the group and have every member answer the following questions aloud:

- What is your name?
- What is your connection to MDPC or to another Christian fellowship?
- What in the past seven days has been really good news for you?

(Please note each member's time should be brief. If 10 members speak for five minutes, you will have taken 50 minutes to introduce yourselves!)

3 Read aloud about The Equipped Disciple Series, The Witnessing Disciple Course, and Group Expectations (10 minutes).

The Equipped Disciple is a multi-course small group curriculum developed at Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church. Each course lasts six sessions, with each session approximately 60-70 minutes. (To take up to 90 minutes, simply extend the group's participation in one or more areas of the session's lesson plan as desired.)

This course, *The Witnessing Disciple*, has the sub-title *Seeing God at Work through Spiritual Conversations*. Each session will focus on one specific aspect of Christian witness that will enable you, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ through spiritual conversations with your family members, friends, neighbors, and colleagues.

Most sessions will include study and discussion on a biblical passage relevant to being a faithful witness. Also, each session will include opportunities to grow in your spiritual practices, such as devotional reading, Scripture memory, and prayer. In addition, you will develop skills for enjoying spiritual conversations with others, including working through a series of #LifeIsMore questions, developing your personal faith story, and practicing how to share the gospel of Jesus Christ in a caring, respectful, and understandable way. Directions for those leading a group are found in the session materials themselves, not in a separate leader's guide.

So your group will be a fruitful and joyful experience, each member will strive to embrace the following:

- Commit to attending consistently.
- Contribute to a group climate of mutual trust, respect, honesty, and vulnerability.
- Discuss willingly. This is not a lecture.
- Prepare in advance for the upcoming group session, barring unexpected events. (If such events occur, come to the session anyway.)
- Write in this guide. (But remember, this is not a writing class. Brief notes may suffice.)
- Bring your Bible every time. Ordinarily, biblical passages won't be printed in the guide.
- Anticipate that the Holy Spirit will do something in you during this time of focus.

4 Read, study, and discuss as a group Matthew 28:16-20 (30 minutes).

Read Matthew 28:16-20 in a Bible translation of your choice, then reflect upon your responses to the following questions and statements. Feel free to write down comments,

thoughts, and notes in the spaces below. When you meet as a group, read Matthew 28:16-20 aloud. Then take one question at a time as a group, share your responses, and discuss your answers with one another.

Set the stage for our study by reading Matthew 28:1-15. What is the context for Matthew 28:16-20?

As the disciples gather to meet with Jesus in Matthew 28:16-17, how is their state of mind described? What surprises you in this description? How does this description confirm the authenticity and truthfulness of Matthew's account?

What does Jesus affirm about himself as he begins his address in Matthew 28:18? Why is this affirmation incredibly important not just for the disciples, but for Christianity in general? What are some of the implications for your life to unreservedly believe this affirmation?

If Matthew 28:16-20 was left out of the Bible, what would we be lacking when it comes to following Jesus? What problems would this absence cause the Christian faith?

Organize a summary of the task Jesus gives the disciples around the "who, what, where, when, and how" questions, and briefly detail what's going on in Matthew 28:19-20. Then add your take on the final question of "why?"

What promise does Jesus make as he concludes in Matthew 28:20? How would this promise be helpful to the disciples as they launch out on the mission? How is this promise helpful to us today?



Many call this passage the “Great Commission.” Define what a commission is. What does this nickname claim or imply about what is emphasized here?

5 Read aloud about devotional Bible reading and responding (5 minutes).

We just finished a Bible study. Another encounter with Scripture growing disciples need to practice often is the devotional reading of the Bible. The consistent devotional reading of Scripture is an important way to experience the continuing presence and guidance of Christ.

For our 6-session course, we will read Acts together as our group’s devotional reading. (Note: if you are already a consistent reader of the Bible, well done! For the group’s time together, though, please either add Acts to your present reading or substitute Acts for your reading plan.)

We will divide this marvelous, compelling story of the early Christian church in this way:

- Before meeting for Session 2, read chapters 1-6 of Acts.
- Before meeting for Session 3, read chapters 7-12 of Acts.
- Before meeting for Session 4, read chapters 13-17 of Acts.
- Before meeting for Session 5, read chapters 18-23 of Acts.
- Before meeting for Session 6, read chapters 24-28 of Acts.

Please note that sometimes our devotional reading connects with our Bible study passage. Other times, however, there is no connection. That’s perfectly fine! We are reading and discussing our readings in the group as a means to get in the habit of meditating on Scripture.

Please do not read mechanically. Reflect upon what you read as you read, and prayerfully discern God’s guidance for you. In your study guide’s appendix, you will find Reading Response Forms to help you answer two questions of each reading from Acts:

- “Of all I have read from Acts, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?”
- “What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God’s leading?”

Please write your responses in the space allotted. In the remaining group sessions, you’ll have the opportunity to share how God has been working through your devotional reading time.

6 Read aloud this introduction to Scripture memorization (5 minutes).

Memorizing anything, especially Bible verses, gets little respect in our day. With the availability of search engines and smart phones, why bother? All you have to do is Google what you want, and there it is! However, Psalm 119:11 insists that storing God’s word within our hearts (in other words, memorizing Scripture!) can be an effective means of enabling and strengthening faithful Christian living. It’s true Scripture memory will take some effort and determination. But it is well worth it.

Our memory verses for this course are Matthew 28:18-20. These three verses neatly and effectively sum up Jesus Christ's commission for developing growing disciples. We'll memorize them from the English Standard Version (ESV) so we can help one another more easily with a translation we share together:

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20, ESV)

!!!!NOTE: If this is your group's first meeting with any of these studies, please work through the helpful hints for memorizing below. If you have done this before, please skip ahead to Section 7.

Some helpful hints for memorizing are:

- Write out the verses in longhand. Something about writing imprints the words on your memory. For some, repeated writing in longhand is quite helpful.
- Write the verses on a 3" x 5" card. Carry it with you and refer to the verses often.
- Say the verses aloud as you practice.
- Break up the verses into their smaller phrase units. Start with the first phrase and work on it until you are comfortable. Then add the second phrase. Continue to add phrases as you learn the verses bit by bit.
- Reflect on the verses' meaning. Connect the verses with their significance for your life.
- Don't forget to include the Scriptural reference and translation at the end, such as "Matthew 28:18-20, NIV."
- Practice often and review regularly. "Overlearning" is often what's needed to break through.

Starting at our next gathering, you will divide into pairs for a brief time of practicing your verses. One will say the verses and receive the helpful correction (if needed) of the other. Then the roles will reverse. You will continue this rhythm through the group sessions. You will want to work on your verses in advance in order to take advantage of this opportunity.

7 Talk about what's needed for next time (5 minutes).

Review the homework:

- Please prepare the Bible study on 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 and Ephesians 2:8-9 for "Session 2: Core," and be ready to share.
- Read Acts, chapters 1-6, and complete the Reading Response Form in the Appendix.
- Start memorizing Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV) and be prepared to practice at the next session.

Solicit prayer requests from group members, including prayer for the group.

8 Close the gathering in prayer.

- 1 Welcome everyone and open with prayer.
- 2 Greet and “check in” with group members (5 minutes).
- 3 Share from your Reading Response Form for Acts, chapters 1-6, and discuss (15 minutes).
- 4 Read, study, and discuss as a group 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 and Ephesians 2:8-9 (30 minutes).

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 and Ephesians 2:8-9 in a Bible translation of your choice, then reflect upon your responses to the following questions and statements as you explore the gospel’s core. Feel free to write down comments, thoughts, and notes in the spaces below. When you meet as a group, read aloud 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 and Ephesians 2:8-9. Then take one question at a time as a group, share your responses, and discuss your answers with one another.

What does the Apostle Paul remind his readers about as he starts 1 Corinthians 15:1-2? Why is this reminder so crucial, according to Paul?

What is Paul summarizing in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8? While all the items summarized are important, pick the one that seems particularly important to you. Please share with the group why you think so.

What other biblical passages elaborate upon the gospel summary given in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8? How do they expand upon this summary? Please give at least two examples.

What two important theological words are front and center in Ephesians 2:8? What is their significance?

According to Ephesians 2:9, what is clearly not an effective way to respond to Jesus Christ? Why do you think this is so?

How does the effective way to respond to Jesus Christ mentioned in Ephesians 2:8-9 differ from the response our culture believes a person should make? Why is this difference so life-changing to grasp? So important to share with others who may be considering the call to follow Christ?

Describe how the gospel of Jesus Christ, as outlined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 and Ephesians 2:8-9, is a reality in your life. What difference has the gospel made to you?

5 Divide into pairs and practice saying the memory verse without notes (10 minutes).

(NOTE: If you are meeting via Zoom, your host will need to set up the “breakout room” feature.) You probably have made progress on memorizing Matthew 28:18-20. If so, wonderful! If you are struggling, remember God is with you as you memorize these verses. Go as far as you’re able. You will have an opportunity next time to continue your work.

6 Talk about what’s needed for next time (5 minutes).

Review the homework:

- Please prepare the Bible study for “Session 3: Conversation” on Acts 16:11-15 and Colossians 4:2-6, and be ready to share.
- Read Acts, chapters 7-12, and complete the Reading Response Form in the Appendix.
- Work on memorizing Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV) and be prepared to practice at the next session.

Solicit prayer requests from group members, including prayer for the group..

7 Close the gathering in prayer.



- 1 Welcome everyone and open with prayer.**
- 2 Greet and “check in” with group members (5 minutes).**
- 3 Share from your Reading Response Form for Acts, chapters 7-12, and discuss (15 minutes).**
- 4 Read, study, and discuss as a group Acts 16:11-15 and Colossians 4:2-6 (30 minutes).**

Read Acts 16:11-15 and Colossians 4:2-6 in a Bible translation of your choice, then reflect upon your responses to the following questions and statements. Feel free to write down comments, thoughts, and notes in the spaces below. When you meet as a group, read aloud Acts 16:11-15 and Colossians 4:2-6. Then take one question at a time as a group, share your responses, and discuss your answers with one another.

Focus on Acts 16:11-15. The setting is Paul and Silas’ journey to Philippi. What method of witness do they employ with the Philippians once they arrive? Why do you think they choose it?

In Acts 16:14-15, who responds to Paul and Silas? What is noteworthy or interesting about this person? How does this person interact with Paul and Silas? What happens in this conversation?

In Colossians 4:2-4, Paul is requesting prayer from the Christians in the city of Colossae. For what? How does this request connect with what comes next in Colossians 4:5-6?

Concentrate on Colossians 4:5-6 for a moment. Describe your impressions of the tone as well as the content of the conversations Paul wishes the Colossians to enjoy. How might we replicate this in our world today?

Some equate talking with people about Jesus and His gospel to making a high-pressure pitch that pushes for an immediate decision. In light of Acts 16:11-15 and Colossians 4:2-6, how do such comparisons stand up?

Both Acts 16:11-15 and Colossians 4:2-6 note the reality of God-empowered conversations. Have you ever experienced a conversation with someone that God seemed to be present in and enabling? Describe it briefly.

What is God saying to you about your conversations? How do you need to act on His guidance this week?

5 Divide into pairs and practice saying the memory verse without notes (10 minutes).

(NOTE: If you are meeting via Zoom, your host will need to set up the “breakout room” feature.) If you haven’t yet memorized Matthew 28:18-20, you no doubt have made great progress. Go as far as you’re able. You will have an opportunity next time to continue your work.

6 Talk about what’s needed for next time (5 minutes).

Review the homework:

- *NEW: Complete the #LifeIsMore questions and be ready to share. You will find the inventory on pp. 11-12 in this guide. To experience the greatest benefit, please complete your inventory before the group meets again.*
- Read Acts, chapters 13-17, and complete the Reading Response Form in the Appendix.
- Work on memorizing Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV) and be prepared to practice at the next session.

Solicit prayer requests from group members, including prayer for the group.

7 Close the gathering in prayer.



Session Four • Confidence

- 1 Welcome everyone and open with prayer.
- 2 Greet and “check in” with group members (5 minutes).
- 3 Share from your Reading Response Form for Acts, chapters 13-17, and discuss (15 minutes).
- 4 Read aloud the directions below. Then share and discuss your responses to the #LifeIsMore questions (25 minutes).

One way you grow in being faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ is to converse about your own faith journey in a safe, supportive environment. The #LifeIsMore questions, developed by Dan Aikins, MDPC Evangelism Pastor (via material from MDPC Senior Pastor Alf Halvorson and the book *Spiritual Multiplication in the Real World* by Bob McNabb), provide a way to develop your skills in spiritual conversations. Please respond to the statements that follow in the space provided.

Divide into pairs or triads (2-3 people) to share and discuss your responses below. (NOTE: If you are meeting via Zoom, your host will need to set up the “breakout room” feature.) Taking one statement at a time, please be open and responsive with each other. Remember, you do not have to share anything that makes you uncomfortable.

I first sensed my need for Jesus when...

What made me most interested in following Jesus was...

Who had the greatest influence on your faith in its beginning (positive or negative)?

The time I felt the greatest doubt or distance from God was...

Since entering into a relationship with Jesus, I have changed from _____ to _____.

Jesus helps me in my daily life by...

If I were to tell someone why I'm a Christian, I would say...

How have you seen God show up or impact your life in the past two months?

5 Divide into pairs and practice saying the memory verse without notes (10 minutes).

(NOTE: If you are meeting via Zoom, your host will need to set up the “breakout room” feature.) If you have not memorized these verses yet, don’t worry! Say what you can. Continue to work on Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV). You will have an opportunity next time to show how far you have come.

6 Talk about what’s needed for next time (10 minutes).

Review the homework:

- *NEW: Complete the Faith Story outline and be ready to share. You will find the instructions and outline on pp. 13-14 in this guide—please read and discuss these instructions before you leave. Please prepare your story before the group meets.*
- Read Acts, chapters 18-23, and complete the Reading Response Form in the Appendix.
- Continue your work on Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV) and be prepared to practice at the next session.

Solicit prayer requests from group members, including prayer for the group.

7 Close the gathering in prayer.



- 1 **Welcome everyone and open with prayer.**
- 2 **Greet and “check in” with group members** (5 minutes).
- 3 **Share from your Reading Response Form for Acts, chapters 13-16, and discuss** (15 minutes).
- 4 **Prepare, practice, and share your Faith Story** (30 minutes).

Your experience with the #LifeIsMore questions has set you up well for an important way to serve as a faithful witness for Jesus Christ: preparing, practicing, and sharing your Faith Story.

What is your Faith Story? It’s not a monologue, but a conversational way you can share what God has done and is doing in your life when He presents you with opportunities to talk with others. It is a 3-5-minute story that flows around three vital points:

- ***Your life before Christ.*** What did your life revolve around before Him? What did you lean on for hope, security, or purpose? If you grew up in a Christian home and cannot recollect a time before Christ, please discuss how your faith became yours and not simply that of your parents.
- ***When Christ brought you to Himself.*** It doesn’t need to be a dramatic experience like the Apostle Paul’s. You simply describe how a living faith in Jesus Christ became real to you. You may share struggles you experienced, or how you moved from “knowing about” Jesus to “knowing” Jesus, or when you gave Jesus control of your life as your Lord.
- ***Your life since Christ.*** Your life is by no means perfect, so you shouldn’t feel compelled to imply otherwise. You are not the hero of this story. But how has Jesus made a difference in you? What motivates you now? How have you grown? What personal challenges remind you of your ongoing need for grace?

Prepare your Faith Story (outline, notes, or manuscript) on a separate piece of paper. Remember to write as you speak, not for an English essay. Be honest and short (3-5 minutes!). Pray as you work on it.

Bring your Faith Story with you to the group meeting. In the group, you will divide into pairs, trios, or quads and share your stories with one another. (NOTE: If you are meeting via Zoom, your host will need to set up the “breakout room” feature.) You may read it or speak extemporaneously. As time permits, you will get into a different pair and share your story again. If you keep to the 3-5 minute time recommendation, you may have two or three opportunities to practice your story and to listen to someone else’s story. Please give each other helpful feedback and encouragement.

After you finish sharing your Faith Story and listening to others’ stories, spend a few minutes as a group and debrief your experience.

- 5 **Divide into pairs and practice saying the memory verse without notes** (10 minutes).

(NOTE: If you are meeting via Zoom, your host will need to set up the “breakout room” feature.) We are coming down the home stretch for memorizing Matthew 28:18-20. Chances are you are well prepared by now to say the entire passage without referring to your notes or needing any prompts from your practice partner. If not, continue to work on Matthew 28:18-20 for the last session. You can do it!

6 Talk about what's needed for next time (10 minutes).

Review the homework:

- *NEW: Develop and practice your Gospel Presentation and be ready to share. On pp. 15-16 of this guide, you will find instructions and options for your review—please read and discuss these instructions before you leave. Please choose one option to prepare for the next group meeting.*
- Read Acts, chapters 24-28, and complete the Reading Response Form in the Appendix.
- Review Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV) and be prepared to say it with a partner at the last session.

Solicit prayer requests from group members, including prayer for the group.

7 Close the gathering in prayer.



- 1 **Welcome everyone and open with prayer.**
- 2 **Greet and “check in” with group members** (5 minutes).
- 3 **Share from your Reading Response Form for Acts, chapters 24-28, and discuss** (15 minutes).
- 4 **Prepare and practice your Gospel Presentation** (30 minutes).

As you start to prepare your Gospel Presentation, please consider the following:

What is the gospel of Jesus Christ? How do you communicate it lovingly and clearly to another person? Some Christians believe only ordained ministers can do this. Those people would be wrong. All followers of Jesus Christ are encouraged to tell the good news to others.

God wants you to take 1 Peter 3:15 seriously when it states, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (NIV). Being prepared when God brings an opportunity to you is yet another way you are a faithful witness of Jesus Christ through your conversations.

Therefore you want to have a Gospel Presentation ready as occasions present themselves in God’s providential timing. You also want to communicate the gospel with “gentleness and respect.” When this sort of communication happens in real life, it’s not a monologue. Often there are questions and responses as the listener ponders the message. In other words, the result is a dialogue between friends.

The most helpful presentations have a visual component to them. Not a video file, but a central illustrative drawing that doesn’t require any artistic talent and can be drawn on a random piece of paper or a napkin. The drawing, together with the speaker’s description, helps the listener understand and apply the presentation.

It’s helpful to see someone deliver a presentation of the gospel as you seek to prepare one yourself. Thanks to YouTube, you may watch the presentation of your choice repeatedly as you take notes and practice it on your own.

One of the most influential Gospel Presentations today is titled “The Big Story.” Its developer is James Choung, vice president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship USA. You may watch Choung himself share “The Big Story” with a two-part presentation on YouTube at the links below. The total presentation lasts just over 6 minutes. (Please click on the links below, search for James Choung or “The Big Story” on YouTube, or type these links into your web browser.)

- “The Big Story Part 1” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCVcSiUUMhY&feature=youtu.be>)
- “The Big Story Part 2” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4V60n6KiB8>)

Another influential Gospel Presentation is “The Three Circles,” which lasts 4-5 minutes. There are several different related versions of this presentation available on YouTube. (Please click on the link below, search for “The Three (or 3) Circles” on YouTube, or type the link into your web browser.)

- “The Three Circles” Version 1: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5W8ynRMr59k>)
- “The Three Circles” Version 2: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oZcEY6qPV84>)

You are free to select “The Big Story,” “The Three Circles,” or another Gospel Presentation of your choice. As you investigate these and other presentations, you will see that most presentations move through at least four phases or stages:

1. How God intended everything to be for humans and for creation as a whole.
2. Why things aren't presently as God intended and why.
3. The steps God has taken to reconcile and restore things to the way He intended them to be.
4. The human response to God's initiative that He desires.

Before the next group meeting, please choose the Gospel Presentation that best suits you. Watch and study this presentation several times. Take notes. Practice the drawing and the speaking, seeking not to memorize but to convey in your language the presentation's message. Keep your presentation no more than 6-7 minutes in length. Remember, there is no Bible study this session, giving you more time to work on your presentation.

Then bring your notes with you to the group meeting. In the group, you will divide into pairs and practice your Gospel Presentation with one another. (NOTE: If you are meeting via Zoom, your host will need to set up the “breakout room” feature.) As time permits, you will get into a different pair and practice again. If you keep to the 6-7 minute recommendation, you should have at least two opportunities to practice your presentation and to listen to someone else's presentation. Please give your friends helpful feedback and encouragement.

After you finish sharing your Gospel Presentation and listening to others' presentations, spend a few minutes as a group and debrief your experience. What made you nervous? What encouraged you? What will you do differently next time? What has this experience revealed to you about yourself and God?

5 Say the memory verses in unison as a group to celebrate what God is doing through this work (5 minutes).

(NOTE: If you are meeting via Zoom, your host will need to set up the “breakout room” feature.) If you have not memorized these verses yet, do what you're able. If you have not memorized them, do as much as you're able, and then continue to work on Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV) in your ongoing practice of Christian spiritual disciplines.

6 As you close in prayer, share at least one benefit you have experienced from participating in *The Witnessing Disciple*. Share your prayer praises and requests as you continue your Christian growth. Give thanks to God for His grace and encouragement (15 minutes).

Reading Response Forms for Acts

For Session 2 • Chapters 1-6

Of all I have read from chapters 1-4 in Acts, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?

For Session 3 • Chapters 7-12

Of all I have read from chapters 5-8 in Acts, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?

For Session 4 • Chapters 13-17

Of all I have read from chapters 9-12 in Acts, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?

For Session 5 • Chapters 18-23

Of all I have read from chapters 13-16 in Acts, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?

For Session 6 • Chapters 24-28

Of all I have read from chapters 17-20 in Acts, what has made the deepest impression upon me and why?

What may God be communicating to me as a result? How might I respond to God's leading?



MDPC
MEMORIAL DRIVE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Houston, Texas • mdpc.org
Adult Discipleship Ministries
Dr. Clay Brown, Adult Discipleship Pastor

© Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church 2024