



Life-to-Life

an experience in intentional discipleship
for congregations

This discipleship manual belongs to

NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Experience for Congregations
Written by the Life-to-Life Team Version: © March, 2022.
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NORTH AMERICAN
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

The material in this packet comes directly from the NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Manual

Agenda for the Informational Meeting:

Open with prayer.

Scripture reading — Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Discussion Questions:

1. What words or phrases stood out for you?
2. In the above passage, verse 17 says that some of the disciples had doubts, yet they are also sent to “make disciples.” Does this surprise you? What does it say to you that Jesus commands all of his disciples to “go and make disciples?”
2. Note that the Great Commission begins and ends with Jesus. He has the authority to send the disciples and he promises to be with them. In other words, the disciples themselves don’t stop being disciples while they are making disciples of others. How might this shape the ways we understand discipleship?
3. Before we can make disciples we must first be disciples. How do you think you are doing in your personal discipleship?
4. Imagine what Good Hope would look be like if we increased our focus on fulfilling the Great Commission? (*brainstorming time*)

Review the Manual:

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Forward

Following his resurrection from the dead and before his ascension back into heaven, our Lord Jesus gave his followers a mission that was to be their first priority and that would become the driving force behind everything they would do. We refer to it as The Great Commission. We consider it to be our Lord's deepest desire and calling for his Church. As a result, until our Lord returns, we understand it to be our primary task.

Disciples of Jesus are not born but are made. They do not just happen. They result from a faithful and faith-filled response to a certain and secure promise. Through Baptism and the teaching of God's Word, the Holy Spirit works to produce faith and to change and transform lives. We are not the ones who transform others. That work belongs solely to the Holy Spirit. We are the ones, however, through whom God has chosen to work.

This NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience booklet is designed to give guidance and direction to the work we are called to do. It provides a foundation for the task we have been given and a framework for how that task might be carried out. It is not a foolproof method. It is not the only way in which the Holy Spirit can and does work. At the same time, it is consistent with the commission and the promise given to us by Jesus, and in concert with the teachings of our Lord that call us to a living relationship with others and a life-giving relationship with Him.

"I am the vine," Jesus said, "you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5 NIV). Discipleship begins with a living relationship with Jesus. Discipleship is lived out as we pass on what we have come to know and believe and have experienced to others.

When Jesus met Peter and Andrew by the shores of Galilee, he invited them into a journey that would ultimately change and redefine their lives. "Come, follow me, Jesus said, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19 NIV)

In that sense, it is not hard to understand what discipleship is about. A disciple is one who is called by Jesus, ("Come, follow me"), is transformed by Jesus, ("and I will make you"), and is on mission with Jesus ("fishers of men"). Another way to say it is to say that a disciple is someone who accepts the invitation and challenge to follow Jesus, strives to live a life consistent with his, and teaches others to do the same.

The North American Lutheran Church (NALC) is committed to following our Lord's commission. We view the making of disciples as our number one priority and task. Everything we are about is designed to serve that primary purpose. All that we do is structured to support the calling and commission we have received from Jesus.

For the same reasons, our vision for the North American Lutheran Church is that every congregation develop a disciple-making culture, every pastor and lay leader become a disciple-producing branch, and every congregational member come to know and believe and trust that the calling and commission Jesus gave to his first followers and, ultimately, to his Church is one that belongs also to them.

My prayers are with you as you respond to our Lord's calling and as you commit to actively sharing in his commission. We are in this together. It is why we exist. And until our Lord returns, it is our primary task.

The Rev. Dr. Daniel Selbo
Bishop, North American Lutheran Church

PAUSE – for thoughts and ... "What questions do you have?"

Introduction

NALC Life-to-Life an experience in intentional discipleship for congregations

In order to encourage our congregations to be more intentional in living out the Great Commission, the North American Lutheran Church has introduced this NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience. An important part of this initiative is engaging our congregational leadership in learning how to have discipling conversations with others in ways that are faithful and natural.

Discipleship, however, is about more than simply learning techniques or offering conversation starters. Though we can teach someone how to proclaim the Good News of Jesus, we cannot implant the desire to share the Gospel with others. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. For this reason, this manual for NALC Life-to-Life discipleship is intended to be an experience rather than a course. Yes, it will engage the mind in sound learning but the ultimate goal is to change hearts and implant a deep desire to live out the Great Commission in our personal and congregational lives.

An important part of this initiative is engaging our congregational leadership in learning how to have discipling conversations with others in ways that are faithful and natural.

In pursuit of this goal, this experience will focus on three essential areas.

- 1. One with God** — It is important to remember that we make disciples when we are disciples. In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16- 20) Jesus sends his disciples to make disciples and promises to be with them forever. We cannot convince others of the importance of following Jesus if we are not doing so ourselves. For this reason each participant will be asked to devote time each day in prayer, meditation, reflection on God's Word and in honest evaluation of their personal discipleship. [Personal](#)
- 2. One with another** — Proverbs 27:17 states, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." (NIV) At the heart of this Life-to-Life Discipleship experience is learning how to engage others in faith conversations. Each participant will be asked to put what has been learned into practice by partnering with one or two others between each session for mutual support and conversation. [Relational](#): Life-to-Life accountability groups of two or three.
- 3. One Body in Christ Jesus** — In his high priestly prayer Jesus prayed, "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." All participants will gather together either weekly or bi-weekly for learning, worship, prayer and mutual support. [Congregational](#)

PAUSE – for thoughts and ... "What questions do you have?"

NALC Life-to-Life Discipleship Experience Outline

Flesh out how the “experience” is intended to work daily & weekly – with YouTube & flexibility

Part 1 - The Discipleship Guide Training Experience

(Seven 1-Week Sessions, each with 7 daily devotions)

Session 1 - What is a Disciple?

Session 2 - The Importance of Intentionality

Session 3 - What is a Discipleship Guide?

Session 4 - How to have a Discipling conversation, part 1 (overview)

Session 5 - How to have a Discipling conversation, part 2

Session 6 - How to have a Discipling conversation, part 3

Session 7 - The Importance of Asking Questions

(Break)

Part 2 - Going Deeper – a Practicum

(Eight 2-Week Sessions, each with 14 daily devotions)

Session 8 - Faith life

Session 9 - Priorities

Session 10 - Family Life

Session 11 - Finances

Session 12 - Health & Wellness

Session 13 - Boundaries

Session 14 - Servant Leadership

Session 15 - Moving Forward with Intentional Discipleship (Life Planning)

Suggested Schedule for Large Group Meetings (flexibility is the key)

Welcome, Prayer and Sharing - 10 to 15 minutes

Time in the Word - Scripture and Discussion questions - 10 to 15 minutes

Study & Large Group Discussion - 20 to 30 minutes

Breakout groups - 30 to 40 minutes

Wrap up and Prayer - 10 to 15 minutes

PAUSE – for thoughts and ... “What questions do you have?”

Who is this resource for?

The NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience is both for everyone, and not for everyone. Jesus calls us to follow him as his disciples (Matthew 4:19) and gives us a commission to make disciples. (Matthew 28:18-20)

This call and commission is for all followers of Christ by virtue of their baptism. Yet, the Holy Scriptures remind us that not everyone who Jesus called responded by following. The reasons were varied: one was not willing to give up his possessions (Matthew 19:20-21), others had family obligations that they held as a higher priority (Mathew 8:19-22), and still others just felt that the teachings of Jesus were too hard to follow (John 6:60 & 66).

The real question of discipleship is not “who is called” but rather “who will follow?” This NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience is not a program or course, but rather a call to fulfill our baptismal vocation to be and make disciples. This call is extended to all but can only be answered by those who, like those early disciples, put following Jesus as their highest priority. It will require a high commitment from those who take part to spend time in prayer, study, personal reflection and encouraging others to walk more closely with Jesus. This is why the resource is both for and not for everyone. The invitation to take part in this discipleship journey is extended to all, but it is intended only for those who are willing to take seriously Jesus’ call to follow.

You will find that **many parts of this manual are repetitive in nature**. The reason for that is to create a pattern of study, prayer, and reflection.

The goal is not simply to finish this experience, but to form a way of life in Christ. Daily patterns will form around the reading of Scripture, meditation and prayer.

Available Resources – to assist in Daily Devotions

Throughout this process you will be praying daily. We offer instruction that simply lays the foundation for prayer which is essential for hearing God. The “tipping point” for spiritual growth seems to be engaging the Word at least 4 times per week. The goal is simple: “To get people to love and life the scripture.” (Mowry)

We want to assist you in growing to hear the voice of Jesus speaking to you and leading you forward to mature as a disciple.

To assist you, we have several resources available. Some resources are more simple, but still thought provoking and adequate to deepen your relationship with God. Others resources are more involved and “cerebral”. Just find what works for you.

1. The manual itself will teach you – its as simple as that.
2. In the manual, on pages 11-15, there is a section entitled “Prayer: The Heart of Discipleship” with several devotional plans, from simple to more complex.
3. Other examples including some we have used during Lent at Good Hope since 2014, when we first began to participate with the NALC and the Navigators to focus on Discipleship.

PAUSE – for thoughts and ... “What questions do you have?”

Informational Meeting - continued

Invitation:

Ask those present if they would be willing to join you in beginning a journey of intentional discipleship. This would require a commitment from each person to:

1. Meet together regularly with the Life-to-Life group which would include seven weeks of learning how to be a discipleship guide. Following a short break, it also means spending eight weeks exploring their personal faith journey using the skills they have learned.
2. Spend time each day in personal Bible study and reflection.
3. Attend the large group meetings.
4. Be willing to learn how to have intentional discipling conversations.
5. Be open and honest in discussing their faith life in small groups of two or three.
6. When you are willing to make this commitment, sign the covenant found on the last page of this packet, or in the Appendix at the back of the purchased book.

Flow of the Week

Saturdays and Sundays are days of preparation and reflection. The other five daily reflections are labeled as weekday 1-5. The flow of the week will change depending on when you meet for the large group sessions.

For example, if your group meets on Wednesday evenings, you would begin the next day (Thursday) with the daily reflection for weekday 1. Friday would be weekday 2. You would then do the reflections for Saturday and Sunday, and Monday you would do the reflection for weekday 3, Tuesday would be for weekday 4, and Wednesday would be for weekday 5.

PAUSE – for thoughts and ... “What questions do you have?”

Nuts and Bolts:

1. Set the times for the large group meetings. Because the large group meetings will most likely take between one and a half hour to two hours, we suggest meeting at a time other than the normally scheduled Sunday school hour.
2. HOW TO – obtain and use the manual developed by the NALC.

Commitment:

Take five minutes for those present to spend time alone prayerfully considering this invitation to discipleship. Have a sign-up sheet available for those who know they are ready to join on this journey.

Others may wish to think and pray about their decision for a little while. That too is a great response. Feel free to speak with me at any time. I've spent the last few years training to coach people in their own decisions.

Close with prayer.

How To Obtain the 274 page Manual

Go the NALC website: www.thenalc.org

At the home page click on the Life-to Life Discipleship tab at the top of the page

1. Scroll to the bottom of that page
2. Above the words “Begin the Journey of Intentional Discipleship” is information on how to purchase a printed copy for \$40
3. Below the worlds words “Begin the Journey of Intentional Discipleship” click on the button that will take you to a sign up page.
4. Fill in your email and your first and last name & click “get connected”
5. A free PDF version will be sent to your email right away.

How To Use the Manual

1. You may be able to purchase your own copy for \$40 and use it for your notes, or
2. You can download the free PDF version and make all your notes digitally on your iPad, notebook or laptop, or
3. You can download the free PDF version to your phone, computer, notebook or iPad and use a second inexpensive journal to record your answers, or
4. You can pick up a paper copy of the next lesson to use (provided at church and online).

“No one should be surprised at the difficulty of faith, if there is some part of his life where he is consciously resisting or disobeying the commandment of Jesus. Is there some part of your life which you are refusing to surrender at his behest, some sinful passion, maybe, or some animosity, some hope, perhaps your ambition or your reason? ... How can you hope to enter into communion with him when at some point in your life you are running away from him?”

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship

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Appendix

Covenant of Discipleship

I, _____ am covenanting with a discipleship group to embark on a journey together where we will study the Scriptures, pray together and reflect daily on the focus areas of the NALC Life-to-Life discipleship experience.

I promise to participate fully, even when it might be a struggle.

I promise to support my fellow group members in an environment of encouragement, trust, and faith.

I promise to hold what is said in the group in strict confidence, respecting my fellow disciples' dignity, integrity, and personal stories.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Members of your Dyad or Triad (be flexible)

**Name
Info.**

Phone

**Name
Info.**

Phone

**Name
Info.**

Phone