



STUDENT LIFE
BOB JONES UNIVERSITY

BJU GROUP LEADER HANDBOOK

A Practical Guide for Discipleship



BOB JONES UNIVERSITY
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INTRODUCTION

One of the last commands of Jesus was to go into all the world and make disciples in every nation. What a blessing and privilege to be commissioned by our Lord and Savior to make disciples on His behalf. Many of us will eventually go out into different cities, states, and countries to accomplish this task, but at this stage in our lives, we have the opportunity to be involved in making disciples right here where we live—at Bob Jones University!

We are thankful God has gifted and burdened so many to be involved in leading a discipleship group here at BJU. This group leader's guide is not exhaustive, but it is designed to help guide our thinking about discipleship and how you can be a part of that as a discipleship group leader or assistant group leader here at BJU.

Section 1: Discipleship @ BJU

WHAT IS A DISCIPLE?

A disciple is one who is following Jesus by obeying His Word, growing in His likeness, and influencing others to follow Him.

We are all disciples who are making and maturing other disciples around us. We are growing ourselves, and leading others to follow Christ—no matter what our role is here at BJU.

WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF DISCIPLESHIP @ BJU?

Bob Jones University seeks to train disciples of Christ who impact the Church and the world for Christ.

This training at BJU comes through relationships, programs, expectations, and efforts alongside local churches focused on:

- Discipling leaders who will boldly declare the Gospel in a hopeless world
- Declaring the authority of an inerrant Scripture in a self-exalting world
- Depending on a sovereign God through prayer in a self-sufficient world
- Developing servants for the local church community in an individualistic world
- Discerning holy *and* culturally appropriate lifestyle choices in a sinful world
- Devoting ourselves to caring, one-another ministry in a self-centered world
- Developing discipline, character, and mutual submission in a self-indulgent world

WHAT IS A DISCIPLESHIP GROUP?

• **Definition of a Discipleship Group:** *A discipleship group is a group of students who are seeking to help each other follow Jesus and grow to be like Him.*

Discipleship groups can be official—as in groups of students who live near each other in the residence hall and are assigned to a group—or unofficial—as in a group of commuting students or resident students who want to gather to influence each other. Though you are probably reading this because of your leadership role in an official group, the possibilities for discipleship go well beyond our official groups.

• **Purpose of our Discipleship Groups:** *BJU provides discipleship groups as a means for disciples to develop spiritual relationships with other believers in an atmosphere of love, grace, and accountability that prepares one for long-term service in the local church.*

o Discipleship groups are one among the many other means here at BJU and in our local churches by which we can grow to become like Christ.

o We have many relationships, but our discipleship group structure provides purposeful opportunities for spiritual interaction—something naturally lacking in many relationships.

o BJU provides an atmosphere of love, grace, and accountability where discipleship relationships can thrive and grow.

o BJU seeks to come alongside local churches in developing and discipling members while we are here together. The ultimate goal is to develop gifts and to disciple one another for long-term service in our local churches all over the world.

• **Practices of our Discipleship Groups:**

We seek to honor God in our discipleship groups by focusing on the following practices: devoting ourselves to God's Word, depending on God through prayer, deepening our relationships in humility, and developing gifts for gospel advance through the local church.

o **Devoting ourselves to God's Word**

Discipleship group meetings provide an opportunity for us to share what God is teaching us personally in His Word. Students at BJU hear a lot about God's

Word, but when we share with peers how God is changing us personally by His Spirit through the Word, we all grow in our devotion to God. Due to our unique emphasis on weekly chapel themes this fall, we will spend significant time on Sunday and Monday nights and Thursday mornings talking about God's Word. God's Word transforms us, so as we share His Word with those around us, we all grow. It also equips us for service and enables our obedience (2 Tim 3:16-17).

o **Depending** on God through **prayer**

Prayer is a vital part of our discipleship groups. Group leaders creatively organize times of prayer, modeling dependence on God as we bring one another's burdens before His throne. We can rejoice together in times of praise and thanksgiving, which remind us to continue depending on Him together. Fellowship in prayer is a vital part of any discipleship relationship, so we seek to share a significant part of our time praying together. We all have genuine needs—and we face stresses in life we have never faced before. God promises grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

o **Deepening** our **relationships** in humility

As we share God's Word together and care for one another in prayer, we will see authentic, humble relationships develop. These relationships will be tempered by circumstances and tested as we live life together, but they will be mutually beneficial as we obey Jesus together and grow to be like Him. These relationships will be encouraging for many years to come.

o **Developing Gifts** for gospel advance through the local church

The ultimate goal of all discipleship groups is for us to develop our character and gifts for long-term gospel advance through local churches all over the world. Discipleship is primarily the responsibility of local churches, but our groups have long been a means by which our character and gifts are developed during the transitional years here @ BJU together. As leaders, we can also encourage our group by example and by sharing experiences in attending, growing through, and serving in one of our local churches in the Greenville area.

• **Core Values of Residence Hall Life**

Focusing on the primary goal of developing **Christlikeness** through all aspects of student life, we want to keep in mind our core values. Dr. Pettit likes all kinds of soup—potato, chicken, minestrone—you name it. A little-known fact though is that he puts tabasco sauce in every soup, so they all taste and smell like tabasco! Every discipleship group will be a bit different, but they should all have the “taste and smell” of the following core values of residence hall life:

o Our **Commitment** to the Authority of God's Word

We firmly believe the Scriptures are inerrant and are inspired by the God we worship. Because the Bible is God's Word to us, we seek to learn from it together and order our lives according to its principles (2 Tim 3:16-17; Ps 119).

o Our **Character** Development

We emphasize the development of the inner person through emphasizing growth in biblically defined and described spiritual virtues such as those in 2 Peter 1 – faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

o Our **Community** Mindset

We remember as we live life together that God has gifted us and called us to lifelong community in the local church and eternal community in Heaven. In our interpersonal relationships we emphasize mutual submission, deference, and our connection together in Christ, always trying to regard others as more important than ourselves (Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:3-4).

o Our **Care** for One Another

We love and serve one another for growth in Christlikeness by humbly and compassionately encouraging and edifying one another, meeting individual needs whenever possible (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Section 2: I'm a Group Leader—Now What?

We are so thankful you are choosing to invest your life in others through our discipleship groups. We have covered some of the philosophy of discipleship—its definition, practices, and values. Now we want to focus in more closely on you as a leader. What goals can we have so that we can be effective in the role of a leader? What are some guidelines for thinking about one another in the context of our groups? Finally, we will provide some practical priorities, so you know how to best arrange your time as a group leader.

WHAT CAN I FOCUS ON TO BE EFFECTIVE?

Goals for Being an Effective Group Leader

As group leaders or assistant group leaders, we have a great opportunity to develop our gifts and abilities in becoming servant leaders. As we reflect on our own relationship with God and how we spend most of our time with others, keep the following goals in mind:

- o **Model** a life of humble devotion to Christ and His Church

Our personal walk with the Lord and commitment to His Church are the most important things we can focus on as we seek to lead others. There is simply no substitute for humble, authentic leadership. As we find our identity in Christ, we avoid the temptation to put up a façade of perfection. As we devote ourselves to His Church and mission, we keep our leadership opportunity in proper perspective.

- o **Minister** to others what God is teaching you in His Word

It can certainly be intimidating to lead others while still feeling like we are learning so much ourselves. The call to lead cannot be separated from the call to follow since the call to lead is simply the call to show others how God is helping us follow Christ and His Word. Simple, personal, and warm-hearted devotional sharing is the best thing we can do for our groups.

- o **Meet** needs with gracious love and committed prayer

We all find that leadership is really about serving others. Seeking to know others, graciously loving them, and then committing to pray for them are our primary goals. The relationships that develop in this way will provide opportunities for practically meeting needs as well and will give us credibility when we need to lovingly exhort our brothers and sisters.

o **Motivate** others to follow Christ and be involved in serving others

The best way to motivate is by joyful example. Giving testimonies, sharing experiences, and pointing out opportunities for others will all serve to motivate them to follow Christ. It can be easy to go it alone, but it is far better and more enjoyable to get others involved in what God is doing in our lives.

o **Mentor** other leaders by providing guidance and opportunities

Disciples are always thinking about the next generation of disciple makers, and in our (generally) four-year life cycle as students, we need to always think about developing those younger than us to carry on the mission the next year. We can do this by providing opportunities for others to share in the group time and by encouraging them to do so in other groups in which they are involved.

These goals are not complicated, but they are sometimes hard to keep in mind in day-to-day life. We are not alone, however, as we have fellow group leaders with whom we meet weekly and regular seminars that will help motivate us to keep serving with joy. Let's make full use of these times of fellowship for our own encouragement!

HOW CAN I MAINTAIN THE HEART OF DISCIPLESHIP @ BJU?

Guiding, Balancing Principles to Keep at the Heart of Your Discipleship Relationships

The positions of group leader and assistant group leader are not given so that we can have authority over our peers, but so that we can serve and influence them to become disciples of Jesus Christ, just like we are growing to be disciples. Following are ten guiding and balancing principles that we will hopefully embrace in our hearts as we seek to lead our group. We believe these principles will guard us from authoritarian pride on the one hand and apathetic distance on the other hand. God helping us, we can have an incredible influence on our peers!

- o We desire our peers know the joy of believing the gospel and of following Christ
- o We believe God can change hearts through prayer and trusting in Him
- o We are more concerned that others are growing in Christ than that they are conforming to external expectations without internal growth
- o We encourage others to take the next step *for them* in following Christ, claiming forgiveness, not dwelling on failures and weaknesses
- o We desire to speak the truth with compassion and love, while knowing the necessity of humble exhortation
- o We seek to have a balanced position that does not err either in legalism or license

- o We understand that God has brought us together from a variety of backgrounds and local churches, and so seek to be charitable regarding debatable issues
- o We value our roles as fellow-believers with a wide variety of gifts.
- o We emphasize camaraderie and deference regarding policies that are intended to help us live well in community
- o We know we have a common cause and common enemy that far surpasses our personal differences as we seek to advance the Kingdom of God together

WHAT ARE MY PRACTICAL PRIORITIES?

Practical Expectations for Group Leaders and Assistant Group Leaders

o Opening Week:

During the first week of the semester, we do our best to get to know the names and stories in our group. Sharing how we came to know Jesus Christ will open opportunities for others to share as well. Talk about the opening services and ask about what others are learning. Start learning about things to pray for and to pray together about. Try to include others, especially new students, in daily routines. Encouraging words will mean a lot to our new friends (Proverbs 12:25).

o Church and Ministry Involvement

As a leader who desires to disciple others, we are also seeking to follow Christ ourselves. Two of the primary ways we will evidence this pursuit publicly are by our commitment to attending a local church and using our gifts to serve the Lord in ministry. We ask that GLs and AGLs are faithful to their local church, attending at least twice a week, and that you also participate in serving in an outreach ministry at least three times per semester (about once per month). This can best be done by serving in a ministry in your local church, but there are many options in the community at large available from the Global Opportunities Office.

o Personal Example in Supporting Policies

As leaders in the residence hall, our actions and attitudes will be a great example to other students when it comes to practically following residence hall expectations. Joyfully obeying the policies will set the tone for how the whole group reacts to expectations. By doing this, we will avoid the extremes of authoritarian enforcement and apathy. Simply clarifying expectations and encouraging compliance in example and word will go a long way toward the group's unity and enjoyment of all aspects of residence hall life. Support the resident assistant and resident supervisor in fulfilling community expectations.

Make use of group leader meeting times to have questions answered and to gain clarity on expectations.

Leadership Training

We provide several opportunities for our GLs and AGLs to develop abilities and opportunities throughout the school year.

- **Discipleship Seminars**

We host discipleship seminars two times each semester, typically on a Monday night from 6-7 pm. While all GLs and AGLs are expected to attend, we hope these will be seminars we all see as valuable--times where we can learn, get questions answered, and receive good instruction and practical tips from people like Dr. Pettit and other faculty/staff members with a burden for discipleship.

- **GL and AGL Meetings:**

The residence hall staff will have regular meetings with you as well. GLs have the opportunity to meet bi-weekly with the resident supervisor, discussing the weekly discipleship study, upcoming events, campus news, and questions about residence hall life, mentoring, and discipleship.

First-year residence hall AGLs will be able to meet regularly with a resident mentor for fellowship, networking, encouragement, prayer, and discipleship. AGLs will have the opportunity to get to know their mentor personally and obtain advice or help in ministering to those in their rooms.

Of course, supervisors, mentors, and other Student Life and Student Care staff are always available for individual meetings, mentoring, discipleship, and fellowship.

Chapel Theme Discussion

- **Purpose:**

As a part of growing discipleship relationships, we schedule a weekly discussion time in order to promote the application of the chapel theme to our daily lives.

- **Format:**

Dr. Pettit will speak each Monday on the chapel theme for the semester. GL's can take Monday night or Thursday morning discipleship group to review the study guide with their discipleship group so that all can benefit from informal discussion and make personal application.

Prayer Times

- Purpose:

As a part of growing discipleship relationships, we schedule regular times of prayer so we can encourage one another as we pray together.

- Format: Sunday, Monday and Thursday

One of the unique blessings of living together as believers in the residence halls, is the opportunity to pray together. Group members will find these times to be valuable, as we share burdens, requests, and praises and then take them to God together in prayer.

Be intentional with this time! Early in the semester give the opportunity for group members to share their testimony and any longer-term requests that the group can pray for all semester. Some group times can focus on praying for a missionary, or on simply praising God. Other times can be spent breaking into smaller groups and sharing prayer requests related to the devotional challenge. Feel free to rotate between the GL and AGLs leading the group prayer time. Discipleship group prayer meetings provide a great opportunity to exercise leadership and creativity, using devotional prayer times to disciple those in the group. The group time is relatively brief, and it is easy to allow the time to be wasted. Setting the pace early in the semester will allow for a very profitable group time. Some of the following suggestions will help:

- Start and end on time. If we wait for those arriving late, they will continue to do so. Start on time! Show respect for everyone's time by ending on time as well.
- Save news and questions for after group time, otherwise we will find ourselves never getting to prayer.
- Be careful to include everyone, rather than allowing a few individuals to dominate the conversation. Ask for input from those who may not normally talk, but do not force them to respond.
- Encourage the group to focus the time positively on fellowship and prayer, leaving food, phones, and studies for after group time.
- Give time for requests but limit the time so there is time to pray. Asking members to write down or text requests ahead of time can help save time for prayer.

Faculty/Staff Partners

One of the best resources for discipleship is our faculty and staff. At the beginning of the year, each discipleship group has the opportunity to choose a faculty/staff partner who will visit the group regularly throughout the year. GLs are welcome to approach a faculty/staff member personally, or one can be chosen from a list of willing faculty/staff members maintained by the Student Life office. Partners enjoy connecting in a variety of ways, like meeting for meals, having the group to their home, and sharing devotionals in the discipleship group. They certainly want to pray for the group and seek to be a help in personally discipling each member.

Residence Hall Guests

Most of us have been a guest @ BJU at some point during our college planning, so we know how valuable it is for prospective students to visit our campus. Residence hall discipleship groups enjoy the opportunity to host visitors on occasion. This provides us a unique chance to show Christian love to strangers. Though having guests is seldom convenient, the blessings and results are worth the effort! We can set the tone for these opportunities in our group to help all of our rooms be gracious hosts.

The Welcome Center will try to inform rooms ahead of time that a guest is coming. We can be practically welcoming by doing simple things like making a welcome sign for the door, giving a guest a lower bunk, making some room in the closet, walking with them to different buildings, inviting them to visit a class, and introducing them to friends and faculty/staff members. Though high school seems like a lifetime ago for us, it will help if we try to place ourselves in their position as a guest. Remember that an overnight visit in the residence hall is one of the major deciding factors for or against attending BJU.

Tools for Student Leaders

- Residence Hall and Student Life Staff

Both the residence hall and Student Life staff are @ BJU because they want to invest in the mission of discipleship. Never hesitate to ask a resident supervisor or mentor for advice, for mentoring, or answers to questions. Those who serve in the Student Life office are available to provide mentoring and discipleship and to answer questions about policies and procedural issues.

- Student Care Office

The Student Care Office, located next to Student Health Services in Reveal, is a place where students can come for confidential biblical counseling and mentoring @ BJU. Students are welcome to come on their own to seek counseling, or they often prefer to have a friend come along initially. Students can be assured that what they share in the Student Care Office will not be shared with others on or off campus without the student's permission, with only the exception of legal issues regarding abuse and when someone's safety is compromised. The Student Care Office is also a place where students can go for confidential advice and information on Title IX issues.

- Title IX Coordinator

Though thankfully rare, in any community there may be times when someone faces an assault, dating violence, discrimination, stalking, sexual harassment, or similar behaviors. Here @ BJU, we are committed to maintaining a safe and secure campus environment for all students and employees, free from all behaviors like those listed above. All reports are taken seriously and are promptly and thoroughly investigated. If you, or someone in your group faces such behaviors, encourage confidential contact with the Student Care Office for information, or encourage the student involved to report directly to the Title IX coordinator at (864) 7701374 or TitleIX@bju.edu. An informational brochure is available at <http://home.bju.edu/life/titleIXbrochure.pdf>.

In cases of emergency, contact local police (911) or public safety (x.5900) immediately.

Personal and Peer Evaluations

During each semester we provide students with an opportunity for self-reflection and personal evaluation. This opportunity is for each student's benefit, allowing him or her to reflect on spiritual life and growth. As a leader, we encourage group members to see this as an opportunity and example of a healthy life habit rather than merely an obligation.

- The Christian Growth Assessment

- Timing: Beginning of first semester

- Process: Each student will fill out his or her CGA and then is asked to share that with a leader or mentor in his or her life. Freshmen should choose an AGL, GL, resident assistant, or resident mentor. Other students may choose to share it with you as their roommate or group leader, and some may choose a friend, pastor, parent or professor. Sharing one's CGA provides the opportunity for a student to receive encouragement, support, accountability, and advice in areas in which they feel they need growth.

- Student Leadership Evaluation

- Timing: March

- Process: Each student fills out an online evaluation, which provides a student the opportunity to volunteer to be a group leader or assistant group leader, and to recommend other peers they think have shown spiritual maturity and who may serve as GLs and AGLs in the coming semester. The evaluation contains commitments that leaders make and seek to maintain with God's help in the present and future. The residence hall staff will use these evaluations to choose GLs and AGLs for the coming semester.

A Checklist of Responsibilities

Below is a summary checklist that may be a help to you in outlining your commitments as a group leader or assistant group leader. All Leaders should seek to:

- Maintain a warm-hearted devotional life with Christ
- Pray regularly and personally for discipleship group members
- Participate regularly in your local church and outreach ministry
- Engage in the mission of discipleship @ BJU, promoting the purposes and practices of discipleship as a leader
- Learn leadership principles by attending discipleship seminars
- Intentionally disciple those in a room or group, leading them to follow Christ
- Uphold and support university policies with a spirit of love, humility, and concern for others
- Seek to help those in the group get further help they need from Student Life or Student Care staff

o Group Leaders should seek as well to do the following:

- Lead or actively delegate leadership for all discipleship group times
- Creatively lead devotional and prayer times in group meetings
- Meet bi-weekly with the resident supervisor along with other GLs in the residence hall
- Evidence initiative in helping and getting help for members of the group

o **Assistant Group Leaders should also seek to do the following:**

- Be ready to lead the discipleship group when asked by the GL
- Lead smaller groups or room meetings
- Meet regularly with the resident mentor
- Meet regularly with the GL for fellowship, encouragement, and prayer

Conclusion

Bob Jones University seeks to train disciples of Christ who impact the Church and the world for Christ. There is no more strategic position in the university than that of peer leadership and discipleship, and GLs and AGLs provide this leadership on campus. The opportunity is both sobering and exciting. It is sobering because we desperately need God's help. It is exciting because we can be one of the means the Holy Spirit uses to change the life of other students for eternity! God is faithful, and we are thankful that He has gifted and burdened so many for this vital ministry.

Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen. (Ephesians 3:20-21)