



## APPRENTICESHIP

**Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19**

**WHAT IS AN APPRENTICE?** In our context, an apprentice is a leader-in-training. Apprenticing is the practice of involving people in ministry for the purpose of training them to take your place. An apprentice is not someone who has it all together, and an apprentice is not merely an assistant to the group leader. It is someone who has caught the vision of what groups are all about.

An Apprenticeship is valuable for everyone. For the current leader, having an apprentice, improves the group experience because as the apprentice learns, the he or she begins to share leadership responsibilities, giving the original leader more time and energy to invest in the lives of group members. The group experiences even deeper community. An apprentice can help fill the gaps and groups will benefit from the input of more than one leader. An apprentice often connects relationally with some of the personalities in the group more easily than the original leader, too.

### WHY DO WE APPRENTICE?

1. **It's Biblical.** Throughout Scripture, we see examples of leaders apprenticing those who would follow in their footsteps. Moses apprenticed Joshua, Elijah apprenticed Elisha, and Paul apprenticed Timothy.

*"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." 2 Timothy 2:2*

The clearest example of apprenticing is that of Jesus and the twelve disciples. Jesus never did ministry alone — His disciples were always with Him, watching, learning, and listening; He involved them in everything He did. He saw beyond His three years of public ministry and knew that He needed to invest in the people who would carry this ministry forward.

2. **It's Strategic.** As part of our Discipleship Pathway, we long to be disciples making disciples. One way we can accomplish this is through apprenticeships. In reality, the biggest barrier to group multiplication is a shortage of qualified group leaders. To find new group leaders, we must look within our existing groups. They are sitting in our groups waiting to be developed into group leaders. The best way to transform a group member into a group leader is through apprenticing.
3. **It's Practical.** Apprenticing is the only effective way to equip leaders in a large-scale, relational, volunteer-driven organization. Not only does apprenticing develop the future leader, it also grows the leader who is apprenticing. When you take the time to teach someone what you know, it allows you to take stock of, process, and organize your knowledge. As you begin to entrust responsibility to your apprentices and they bring their knowledge, talent, and experience to bear upon what you've shared with them, they will find new and better ways to lead. This gives you the opportunity to learn from them and expand your own knowledge and skills.

### FOR THE LEADER:

Step 1: Invite. Make a personal invitation to someone in your group. Don't ask for volunteers. Look for someone you're already connecting with and who is willing to share your responsibilities and get involved in leadership. Remember: You don't need to find someone who can lead a group right now. Your apprentice will have plenty of time to learn and grow.



Step 2: Connect. Relationship is the priority. You and your apprentice need to encourage each other's spiritual growth through transparency and accountability.

Step 3: Share. At first, you will lead and your apprentice will watch. Next, you will lead and your apprentice will help by sharing tasks with you. After this, your apprentice will lead and you will help. Finally, your apprentice will lead and you will watch.

#### **HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR APPRENTICE:**

Remember that you are not looking for someone who can lead your group tomorrow. You are looking for a teachable group member who has the potential to be a great group leader in the future. It is important that this person has a personal relationship with Jesus. It is important that this person can model what it looks like to be in a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Consider if this person has displayed leadership skills in your group. Is your potential apprentice committed to the mission and strategy of the church? Have you been able to connect relationally with your potential apprentice? Has this person connected well with other members of your group?

#### **HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR APPRENTICE:**

There is no set formula in developing an apprentice because everyone is unique. You will need to tailor your approach to fit your personality as well as the personality of your apprentice. While you should be modeling group leadership and involving others in the group throughout the group's life, to develop your apprentice, you will shift your focus to specifically involve your apprentice and intentionally model specific attitudes and skills.

*Recruiting:* This shift in focus begins with recruiting your apprentice. How you recruit your apprentice can set the tone for the rest of the development period. Why did Matthew follow Jesus? Because Jesus invited him to. Jesus didn't ask for volunteers to be His disciples — He picked them. He made a general call for people to believe in and follow Him, but He handpicked those who would lead the way. The act of inviting people to leadership, if done well, can communicate that they are valued and respected.

Consider the following invitations to leadership: "Our Adult Ministry Director said I need to have an apprentice, so I put your name down. You'd kinda be like the assistant group leader, that cool with you?" Versus: I can really see you and your spouse leading a new group. I think you bring a lot to the table, and I can tell that you really believe in discipleship. So, I'd like you to consider being the apprentice leader for the duration of this group, to prepare you to lead the next group."

The invitation is also your first opportunity to cast vision for what apprenticing and group leadership is all about. Share the passion you have for your role as the leader. Share with them why you think their gifts are well suited for the role. Most potential apprentices are going to have some reservations about becoming a group leader; chances are they don't feel qualified to lead a group. Your invitation is an opportunity to address their concerns, while also building them up. It also provides a natural segue into communicating the expectations for both group leaders and apprentices. For the most part, their understanding of what group leaders are supposed to be is governed by what they see you doing. If the two of you are gifted in different ways, and they don't feel like they would be good at the things they see you do well, they may not think they are suited for group leadership. This is a great opportunity to discuss what a group leader is and what a leader isn't.

They may still be overwhelmed, but at least they know what is expected of them. If you've taken this strategic view of recruitment, you will have begun the development process by:



- Affirming their value and leadership skills.
- Casting vision for both the group leader and apprentice role.
- Communicating what is expected of them as apprentices.

*Modeling:* The apprentices' understanding of what group leadership is all about is based largely on what they see you doing as their leader. This dynamic can be leveraged to build your apprentice's group leadership skills if you are strategic and intentional about the way you lead. There are two critical elements to strategic modeling: demonstration and explanation.

Demonstration is fairly self-explanatory; it is simply showing them how to lead by watching you. Everything you do as a group leader — the way you lead discussions, how you demonstrate authenticity, how often you interact with group members outside of the group meetings — all of this is a lesson about group leadership. The key to effective demonstration is to think through what lesson you want to communicate and act accordingly. For example, it may be your natural tendency to allow discussion time to run long; but since you want to demonstrate the value of adhering to the guidelines you've set forth on how long discussion time should go at the beginning of your group, you make a conscious effort to wrap the discussion up on time, even though there are still two questions you didn't get to.

Explanation involves directly communicating with your apprentice about the principle you are modeling. For example, if you want to model a sensitive response to tough questions, you may want to say to your apprentice, "tomorrow night's discussion is probably going to provoke some emotional responses from Kelly, since she recently lost her stepmom who was not a Christian. I'd like you to listen to how I respond to her comments and questions, and you and I can talk later about why I responded the way I did." This helps your apprentice pay particular attention not only to what you do, but also your method or approach. It allows you to focus attention on a specific skill or principle that you are modeling. By making it a priority to talk about what was or will be modeled, you create opportunities for the apprentice to ask questions or provide feedback.

To put the demonstration/explanation strategy into practice, you'll need to know what it is you want to model. One way to do this is to spend some time thinking about what you've learned in your time as a group leader. Ask yourself what would be helpful for your apprentice to know or learn and how you might model it.

Some great leadership skills you can model are:

Facilitating discussion — in particular, how you listen more than you talk; how to engage the introverts or rein in the over-talkers.

Investing in group members — spend extra relational time with your apprentices and pray both with them and for them.

*Involving:* To build both their competence and confidence, an apprentice will need to practice leading a group. They will need opportunities to put into practice what they have learned through your modeling. The best way to prepare them is to actively involve them in leading your group.

Start Small — You can start by asking them to take the lead on a specific area such as: planning a social event, leading the discussion time, or leading the prayer time.

Build up — As they show they're ready, invite them to play an increased role in leading the group. You might give them the opportunity to lead the entire group meeting instead of just one part. Present them with the chance to direct the group through a key discussion or involve them in conflict resolution, as appropriate.



Provide and invite feedback — As they take on responsibility, give them feedback on how they're doing. Be sure that you give more affirmation than criticism. Just as important as you giving them feedback, ask them to reciprocate. How did you do; what went well, and how could you have done it better?

Encourage training — Make sure your apprentices are invited to any training events. Not only will this provide practical training and vision for group leadership, but it will reassure them that our church is committed to supporting and training them.

For many group leaders, involving their apprentices can be challenging. They may feel a tremendous sense of ownership and responsibility for their groups, and they are hesitant to entrust that responsibility to someone else. One thing to keep in mind — success is not just a job well done or more people under your care. Success is another competent leader who is ready to take your place as a new group is planted.

Since planning for multiplication means planning to plant more future groups, your apprentice will need to be on board and intimately involved with the planning for that.

*Connecting:* When you recruit your apprentice, notify the Adult Ministry Coordinator so that the apprentice can be invited into the leadership process. The Adult Ministry Coordinator will help to guide your apprentice through the application process. The process includes:

1. Confirming that the apprentice is a partner of the church
2. Completing the group leader application and in some cases a background check
3. Being Interviewed
4. Approval

Some of these steps can take some time.

By making a commitment to identifying and developing an apprentice (replacing yourself ), you are playing a significant role in raising up the next generation of leaders and ensuring there will always be a place for those who are needing to connect in a group.