



## *Discipleship Groups*

In addition to the Spiritual Mentors program, it is important for the church to establish Discipleship Groups. The purpose of these Discipleship Groups is to ground participants in the fundamental teachings of the Bible while encouraging their commitment to Christ.

These Discipleship Groups should target three groups of people:

- Non-member contacts and interests
- Newly baptized members
- Those preparing for baptism

Steps in Implementing the Discipleship Groups:

### **1. Decide on the number of Discipleship Groups your church will have.**

Each Discipleship Group should consist of 8 to 12 people. The number of new members and interests generated from the evangelistic meetings will then determine the number of Discipleship Groups your church will have. It might be necessary to have more than one Discipleship Group for a particular target audience. Try to match up those attending the Discipleship Groups with others of a similar spiritual level, age, and education.

### **2. Choose leaders for the different Discipleship Groups.**

Leaders should be chosen based upon their love for Jesus, spiritual maturity, and leadership potential. Their responsibilities include leading out in the weekly meetings, connecting with those within the group, and encouraging friendship and spiritual growth. It is also important that each group leader have someone who will be able to lead out in their absence.

### **3. Choose locations for the Discipleship Groups.**

Where possible, the Discipleship Groups should meet once a week at a church member's home. In any event, choose locations that are comfortable and that are not too far for those participating to travel.

#### **4. Choose leaders of the children's program.**

It is important to provide for the children of those attending the Discipleship Groups. This can be done by having all of the discipleship meetings at the same time while a children's program is taking place at the church. Those involved in the Discipleship Groups can then drop their children off before the meeting and pick them up after the meeting is over, or have their discipleship meeting at the church.

Some churches schedule their Discipleship Group meetings to coincide with the Pathfinder and Adventurer programs. Remember to keep the children's program exciting and interesting. If the children look forward to attending, they will encourage their parents to attend the Discipleship Groups.

#### **5. Choose a start and end date.**

It is important that your Discipleship Groups have a starting and ending date. We suggest that your small groups run for a total of 13 weeks, with one week for an off night.

New members are often faced with these three challenges:

- The call of the world
- Lack of fellowship with other disciples (new believers should ideally make a minimum of seven new friends during the first six months)
- Personality clashes with others in the church

In order to encourage new members in their Christian walk during these 13 weeks, the Discipleship Groups may choose to study one of the following topics:

- Bible doctrines
- The Spirit of Prophecy
- Adventist lifestyle
- Basic history of the church as it relates to their part of the world
- Discipleship, stewardship, and church life

#### **6. Invite participants to the Discipleship Groups.**

After the necessary arrangements have been made for the implementation of the Discipleship Groups, the next step is to invite the new members, non-members, and those preparing for baptism to the various Discipleship Groups.

Assemble the Discipleship Groups with those of similar backgrounds, ages, and spiritual levels. If a presentation is too deep for someone in the group, they will end up losing interest and will stop attending; or if the presentation is too shallow for another, they will become bored.

After individuals have been assigned to each group, the next step is inviting them to attend. This is best done by a personal invitation from the leader of the Discipleship Group. Tell those who are being invited that the small group will go for 13 weeks and what will be studied. The leader will also need to inform those invited of the children's program that will be taking place at the same time. The leader will need to give directions and other necessary information to those who are invited.